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HEADS AND TAILS.



STUDIES AND STORIES OF PETS.

BY

GRACE GREENWOOD.



NEW YORK:
THE AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY.

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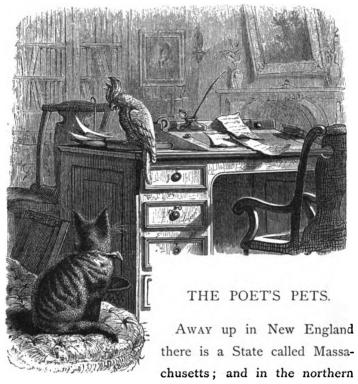
CONTENTS.

							•	
								Page.
THE POET'S PETS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	5
Parrots	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	15
A DIPLOMATIC PARROT .	•		•	•	•	•		27
An Old Family Friend .			•	•	•			39
THE STORY OF A HORSE .				•	•	•		57
A HARROWING RECITAL .	•	•		•	•	•		69
MAC'S RIDE		•		•	•	•		77
Something about Toads.				•	•	•		87
A Couple of Queer Littl	e Cu	STOM	ERS			•		99
FARM-YARD FRIENDS								109
THE FIVE LITTLE SISTERS	of M	APLE	Law	'n.		•		123
THE PERI		•						145
Bob: his Life and Death								155
Master Tom's Experiment						•		165
WATE								175

ILLUSTRATIONS.

		•							
								1	PAGE.
THE POET'S PETS	•	• ,	•	•	•	• .	•	•	7
GROUP OF PARROTS .	•	•		•	•	•	•		17
ORNAMENTAL INITIAL A,	WITI	H PAR	ROT	•		•	•		29
Bose by the Fireside	•	•		•				•	41
TAMING OF THE COLT		•	•	•	•				5 9
Waiting for Dinner		•	•	•	•	•			89
FARM-YARD FRIENDS.	•	•	•	-					111
LITTLE PORKERS		•	•	•	•				112
HEN AND CHICKENS .		•		•			·		117
THE LITTLE SISTERS OF	MAP	LE LA	.wn						125
THE PERI							•		147
Bob's Death				•					157
Tom and Alice feeding	THE	E SNO	w-Bir	RDS		•			167
WAIF		•							177
MONTY AT HOME .									181
BIRDS ON A SPRAY					_				185

THE POET'S PETS.



part of that State there is a certain village; and in that village there is a pretty cottage; and in that cottage there is a poet; and in that poet there is a great, good, gentle heart, that makes him love all grand and beautiful things, pity all who suffer, or are in any way ill used, and feel a kindly sympathy with all the innocent or quaint little creatures that God has made. He writes very grandly of summer's splendor, of winter's storms, of the breaking of

the great sea on the lonely beach; but he seems to see God's providence as plainly in the quiet lives of familiar animals as in the changing seasons, to hear his voice as clearly in the carol of the robin as in the surge of the ocean. The swallow flying south preaches faith and obedience for him; and the little snow-bird's twitter says plainly, "Give us this day our daily bread."

It has been my happiness to visit often at this cottage, and to see just how this great poet lives, — not with his head in the clouds above us all, but in sympathy with the humblest, most every-day sort of people, if they be but only good and true. He is simple in all his ways, and perfectly comprehensible in his talk, I assure you.

On one of these visits, years ago, I was greatly amused by a pretty white and gray kitten (a pet of the poet's), which he had somehow brought under loving subjection to his authority. She would follow him about from room to room in a very feeling but unfeline way, and seemed to understand every word he addressed to her. She would sit on his desk when he was writing poetry, and purr and wink knowingly when he got off a good verse, as though she were his little mews, and deserved half the credit. Sometimes the poet would lay her out on the carpet, straight on her back, and, closing her eyes, tell her to lie there per-

fectly still; then he would leave the room for several minutes. There she would lie, playing dead, her paws folded on her white breast, and a peaceful expression on her countenance, till her master would come back and recall her to life. So perfectly did the little creature simulate death (or a *cat*aleptic trance), that only an almost imperceptible quiver in the tip of her tail betrayed her. That tail was a tell-tale.

On subsequent visits, I found at the poet's house a handsome parrot, from Australia I believe, and the real hero of
this story. Charlie was his name; and he was a very gallantlooking fellow indeed, in a sort of dove-colored uniform,
turned up with scarlet, and with feathers brilliant enough
for a field-marshal. He was not distinguished for general
amiability,—few of the parrot family are; but he was certainly a remarkably quaint and knowing bird. In his early
parrot-hood, I doubt if his parents expected to raise such
a prodigy of cleverness. If they could have foreseen that
he would be one day the companion of a great poet, they
would have thought it a fine thing—for the poet.

Charlie was not kept confined to a cage or perch, but had usually the freedom of the house; though he was rather mischievous, and decidedly discourteous to such visitors as he happened to take a pique against. He had the dislike, peculiar, I think, to parrots, of bare feet; and woe to the village boy or girl, or Irish servant-maid, who ventured to appear in his august presence unshod and unhosed! He would begin by circling round and round the offender, softly, slowly reconnoitring the position, then suddenly pounce on the foot or ankle, and nip and pinch in the most vindictive and remorseless manner. One day a stranger from the rural districts called to see the poet, who is a quiet, studious man, and that morning happened to be particularly engaged in his study. Yet he had not the heart to deny himself to a visitor, who perhaps had come a long way to see him, but did his best to make him feel welcome and at ease. After all, the conversation was rather constrained on both sides, and the morning was passing rather heavily, when the poet happened to notice that the stranger - a tall young man, if I remember rightly - kept "changing base," by crossing first one leg, and then the other, over its fellow, and that in so doing he had worked his light linen trousers up toward the knee, and left exposed above the short stocking a considerable undefended territory of leg. Scarcely had the poet noted this latter circumstance, when his mischievous familiar Charlie came tiptoeing into the study from the porch, and paused for a moment, with his head on one side, regarding the stranger

with no very friendly expression in his cold, sly, wicked little eyes, as much as to say, "Here's another bore come to besiege my master!" Suddenly he caught sight of that tempting piece of undressed calf, and, before the benevolent poet could intervene, made a desperate onslaught, pitching in like a little avenging genius of the study. With a startled scream, the tall stranger leaped into the air, shaking off Charlie, who coolly tripped away to his perch, laughing like a hobgoblin; and the poet noted with horror that there was blood upon his beak! The tall stranger soon took his leave; and it is to be presumed, that, after this experience, his visits were made shorter, or his trousers longer.

On summer mornings Charlie liked to sit on his perch on the sunny piazza, and hail the passers-by. It was his way of seeing life, and keeping up his importance in society. Sometimes the school-children would tease him by too great familiarity; then he would scold dreadfully, but I never heard him use profane language. It is more than likely that he had picked up a few oaths from the sailor-talk on shipboard, or in cities through which he had passed, for he was a parrot that had seen the world; but the example of this sober and gentle household had told on him, and his speech was blameless, though his spirit was yet unregenerate.

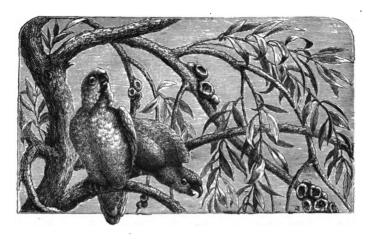
One morning, when some lads, pausing on their way to school, were shouting to him over the paling, he heard the nine-o'clock bell, and called out, "Be off, boys! The bell rings."

Charlie was fond of making explorations about the house and garden, and grew daily more independent and adventurous in his habits. At last he made his way up the waterspout, or some vines, to the roof of the house, where he screamed and laughed, hopped and danced, and cut up various delirious didos. Next his "vaulting ambition" carried him to the top of the highest chimney; from which point of vantage he shrieked yet more defiantly, and laughed more mockingly, and, in fact, "sassed" the whole town. Every pleasant day he would resort to this lofty perch, and, right in sight of the Friends' meeting-house, indulge in such unquakerly antics, in such boastful and unprofitable talk, that it is a wonder the quiet neighborhood was not scandalized. One luckless day, however, Charlie the bold, while engaged in some of his mad pranks on the narrow coping of the chimney, lost his balance, and fell down into the dark chasm beneath; at least, so it was supposed, but no one witnessed the catastrophe. It was only known that Charlie had disappeared, that he did not come for his rations, or return to his perch at night. The room, from the fireplace of which the tall chimney led, was not used at this time: so, in the long and careful search that was made for the lost parrot, nobody thought of looking there. Indeed, he had not fallen into the fireplace, but had lodged in a narrow part of the chimney, about half way up, and, it seems, was not enough of a "sweep" to make his way out. At length, when he had been gone three or four days, and his anxious friends had given up looking for him, supposing him to have been stolen by gypsies, or to have run away to seek his fortune, and all the household except the cat was in mourning for him, the poet, happening to enter the unused parlor, heard a faint, familiar voice, away up in the chimney, crying, "Poor Charlie!" He went to the fireplace, removed the board, and looked up to where a dingy little object intercepted his view of the blue sky. It was the lost I do not remember just how they released the unfortunate bird; but I think they let down a basket by a rope, and he got into it, and was drawn out. All the way up he pitied himself, and bemoaned his fate, and all the way down into the study continued his sad plaint. he saw his master, he wailed out afresh, "Poor Charlie!" and then, "Charlie wants water." Water was given him, and cracker, and every delicacy adapted to his condition; and all the household rejoiced over him, except the cat;

but every thing failed to comfort him. He would look at his sooty feathers, and his dilapidated tail, and keep up his mournful refrain, "Poor Charlie! poor Charlie!" He was washed and smoothed, and put comfortably to perch; but in the morning he was as dolorous as ever, — a regular Jeremiah of a parrot. He never held up his scarlet-tufted head in the old saucy, pert way again. It seemed that black chimney had been to him as a perpendicular "Valley of the Shadow of Death;" for, after emerging from it, he grew so meek and serious-minded, I really believe that a whole Sunday-school procession of barefooted boys and girls could have passed his perch without his making a single sally upon them. He never laughed much, or mocked, or boasted any more; but became quite a model bird, and made a very good end at last.

His death did not produce a very profound sensation in the community, though, doubtless, he had been used to think that he kept the dull old town going; and, though much speaking had been his sole gift, he had no soul to speak of. Yet I doubt not the great poet felt something of tropical brightness, something of pleasant humor and weird companionship, something of dear association, pass out of his life when poor Charlie died.

PARROTS.



PARROTS.



CONFESS to a curious and spinster-like interest in parrots, — those absurd little burlesques, those feathered parodies upon humanity. Nothing in animated nature so inclines

me to accept, as something more than poetic fancies, the old Greek fables of human souls in the bodies of animals. In such forms might be very fittingly lodged the inconsiderable souls of idle gossips and dull pedants, to be mercilessly questioned and drilled in tiresome iteration in their turn.

Then, again, they appear to me rather originals than parodies. So quaint, so wise and old, are they, it would seem that they antedate humanity. Is it not possible that they originally served as experiments of Nature,—as little models, to contain the peculiar vocal machinery of speech,

some of those delicate chords and pipes that were to be perfected in the human organism?

So, also, may not many of the other qualities and faculties of man have found partial expression and embodiment in the lower animal kingdom, dimly foreshadowing the last and highest creation?

As, while human folly and sin did not exist, grotesque and horrible monsters prefigured them; so splendid wild creatures were brave and enduring, so winged lovers were mated, so mute mothers gloated over their young, so antlered leaders died for the herd, while manly heroism and devotion, womanly tenderness, the sacred rapture of Mary's maternity, the passion of Christ, were yet embosomed in God.

But this is a rather serious and speculative beginning for what I intended to be only a light and merry chronicle of parrot sayings and doings.

The State of Iowa, among many remarkable things, boasts a very remarkable parrot, about whose story there is something quite romantic and mysterious. A farmer in the southern part of the State was once driving through a lonely wood, when he heard a strange, shrill voice calling, "Stop! stop! Hold up! hold up!"

So imperative was the command, that the farmer checked

his horses, looked eagerly around, and then above him, as the voice seemed to come from over his head. For some moments he saw nothing; then, far up in a tall oak that overhung the road, he perceived a large green parrot, which was rapidly letting itself down from branch to branch, keeping up its shrill cry of "Stop! stop! Hold up! hold up!" At last the bird dropped from the lowest limb on to the shoulder of the farmer, and nestled up against his face, with the immemorial parrot-plaint of "Poor Poll! Poll wants cracker!"

The farmer, though almost afraid of the queer bird so strangely encountered, assured her of protection, and carried her home, where she created a profound sensation, where she was well fed, and kindly cared for in every way, and where she has ever since remained an admired and a respected member of the family-circle. She soon developed rare talents, and revealed varied acquirements, and her fame spread far and wide. She was evidently a bird that had seen the world; for her conversation revealed the fact of extensive travel, and of recent life on shipboard, judging by certain naughty nautical expressions unbecoming her sex. It was thought, from her dialect, that she was of English breeding, hailing from Yorkshire; and it was supposed that she had made her escape from some Mor-

mon emigrant-train, the wood in which she was found being on the direct route to Utah. Not taking to the faith of Joseph, she had chosen rather to run her chances among the Gentiles, than to enter the Canaan of the saints. The old religion, she decided, was good enough for her. It was the one she had been taught to swear by, and she was not prepared to turn tail on it now. She may have had her own objections to making one of a harem of chattering parrakeets, to being "sealed" to some Brigham Young of an old macaw. The very term "pol-ygamy" may have alarmed her.

The farmer has, in his fine home-flock, a pair of twin boys, so wonderfully alike in form, size, face, complexion, expression, and voice, that, at sight of them, strangers often rub their eyes in anxious bewilderment, thinking that the infirmity of double-sight has befallen them. Father, mother, brothers, and sisters are often deceived in these little Dromios; and amusing mistakes and misunderstandings are constantly occurring. When a piece of mischief is done by one, the real offender can never be accurately fixed upon, unless he "fess," or his double turn state's evidence. It generally lies between the two; and if John is true to Joe, and Joe to John, they both escape. They are usually whipped and kissed, fed and physicked, at

random. It is believed, in the household, that John is the eldest of the twins by about thirty minutes; and he greatly prides himself on that dignity in the family. On going to rest at night, he is careful to "lay his garments by" in a particular spot, and always to take the front side of the bed, lest he may awake in the morning Joe, and lose his birthright without knowing it.

But, strange to say, all this marvellous resemblance, this almost identity, has been, from the first, "no let" to Polly. With a sort of clairvoyance, she is always able instantly to distinguish between them. She proves this unerring instinct of apprehension in a marked and peculiar manner. To John, on first acquaintance, she took a violent antipathy, to Joe a most tender fancy; and has never been known to confound for a moment the object of her animosity with the hero of her maiden adoration.

The friend who relates this story to me says that he once incited these little hawk-eyed Gemini to a sham fight, in order to observe the effect on the enamoured Polly, whose cage-door was set open. At the first hostile demonstration against her favorite, she sallied forth, and pitched in, nipping and clawing at John's bare shins, beating with her wings, scolding like a fish-woman, and, I am shocked to say, swearing like a sea-captain. When John fell back,

leaving Joe master of the field, great indeed was her triumph; she laughed and huzzaed, and strutted back to her perch as proud as the Queen of Palmyra after an apparently victorious sally against the Romans.

Our farmer has a daughter, of a comely countenance and a courtable age; and this fair maid has a certain favored admirer, whose Sunday-evening visits to her cause a little pleasant excitement among the younger members of the family,—an excitement which even ruffles Polly's feathers. and the drift of which she seems, in some weird, inexplicable way, to have divined. On the occasion of the first memorable visit of this suitor, as he was sitting, very little at his ease, in the parlor, with a very red face, though the room was not overheated, with hands and feet that wouldn't keep still, and a heart that outbeat his watch, saying unutterable things with his eyes to the object of his worship. now and then dropping from dry lips a husky remark about the corn-crop and the weather, which was briefly and demurely responded to from the other side of the fireplace, there suddenly entered, through a door softly opening from the hall, Mistress Polly. She came tripping daintily along, peering curiously at the young couple with her head on one side, out of "the tail of her eye," in a queer, quizzical way, peculiar to her kind. She walked

deliberately round the blushing stranger, whose appearance did not seem to inspire her with the profoundest respect, for she presently broke out in a peal of the wildest laughter, then shouting, "Oh! what a beau, what a beau!" ran from the room chuckling and screaming.

The family made a great mystery of this incident, declaring Polly's knowingness and wit quite supernatural; but I should like to know something of the whereabouts and doings of the twins on that evening!

I have a pleasant friend in a pleasant town in New England, who, good woman, rejoices in many good gifts of Providence and sea-captains, among them being a parrot of great cleverness, "credit, and renown." This remarkable bird not only resembles her mistress in conversational powers, but in social feeling. She is very fond of company, and, whenever a neighbor calls, will greet him or her with the most condescending cordiality, bustling up and down her cage, and calling out right cheerily, "How de do? Take a chair! Glad to see you."

Occasionally these invitations are a little awkward and malapropos; but, as a general thing, Polly acts as the feathered proxy of her mistress, "on hospitable cares intent," like another Yankee parrot I once heard of, who, on the dropping-in of a certain nice, gossipping old lady,

always sung out, "Brought your knitting? Stay to tea? Molly, put the kettle on!"

My friend bears a name made judicially illustrious by one of the original woman's-rights women, and classical by modern dramatic genius, — that of "Deborah;" but in her family, and wide circle of friends, she is called, perhaps from something off-hand, jolly, and debonair about her, just "Deb." She is even "Deb" to her parrot, in which small friend and merry gossip she has great delight.

My friend is musical, plays the piano, and sings about every thing going; and Polly usually listens very complacently, with the grave, absorbed air of a critic. But, on one occasion, the lady was, from a cold, out of voice, or the bird was out of temper, or both: certain it is, that, before the first verse of a popular ballad was finished, Polly shrieked out in disgust, "Oh, dear! dry up, Deb, dry up!"

As far as I know them, the members of the Parrot family are usually of a lively and diverting disposition, though some are far from amiable, honest, or loving; but I know a parrot who is so mournful and solemn a bird, that he reminds one of an undertaker, or a parson of the grim old Calvinistic type. He speaks in a peculiarly sepulchral

voice, that startles and chills one, suggesting the opening line of a certain mournful hymn, —

"Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound."

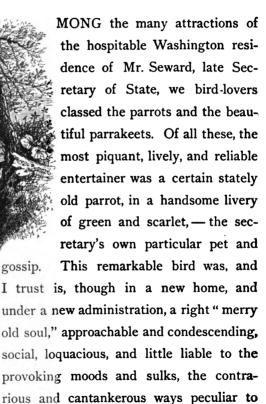
This funereal fowl, in the midst of a happy, beautiful, luxurious home, seems to serve a purpose like that of the skeleton at the feasts of the ancients, there is such a gloomy awfulness, such melancholy *memento-mori-ness*, about his aspect, as well as his speech. When that lugubrious bird was hatched, some Heraclitus must have died.

3

A DIPLOMATIC PARROT.

A DIPLOMATIC PARROT.

his race.



His cage usually hung in the pleasant little library opening off the hall, where he watched the incomings and outgoings of the household; where he saw the visitors who dropped in informally; where he heard their light gossip, their hurried business talk, or their grave inquiries or arguments on affairs of state. In political discussions, whenever they grew at all stormy, he especially delighted, and seldom failed to mingle; royally riding on the storm, and loyally echoing his distinguished master's sentiments, or helping to laugh his opponents down.

That laugh of his is the most startlingly human sound I ever heard from the throat of a bird. It is frightfully funny.

Some time last summer, while the window near which his cage stood was kept open, the parrot was attracted by the vocal exercises of an infant next door, one of those cherubic babes that "continually do cry;" and at length he startled the family by an imitation so dolorously perfect that it was feared some poor little castaway had somehow been smuggled into the house. At another time hismaster was afflicted with a cough, and immediately his faithful "ancient" had symptoms of bronchitis.

Certain voices were sure to excite his emulation or his antipathy. On one occasion, when Senator Sumner was

discussing some political question with Mr. Seward, not by any means taking pains to "roar him gently," the parrot became fearfully excited, and, I was told, actually screamed him down with all sorts of unparliamentary hootings and catcalls. There may have been something particularly disturbing to parrot complacency in the orotund, autocratical voice of the distinguished senator from Massachusetts, provoking that irreverent fowl to laugh at his radical pronunciamentoes, whistle at his stately periods, and cough in the midst of a Latin quotation. It may have been his private opinion that a senate of spirited parrots would long ago have rebelled against a voice of that exasperating and ex-cathedra quality.

Of late years the politics of this wonderful bird have probably been of the conservative type; but I doubt not he has sown his own wild oats of radicalism. I doubt not there was a time when such phrases as "The Irrepressible Conflict"—grand words which came from the lips of the great statesman, crammed with prophecy and power—were caught up by his familiar, and valorously reiterated, defying the unbelief and policy of the hour. And I think it very likely there was a period, when, sitting nodding and winking on his perch, in the midst of confusion and dread, the bird's cheery refrain was, "Ninety days, ninety days."

Perhaps, still later, he talked persistently and knowingly of "Reconstruction," "Amnesty," "Alabama claims," and "Alaska."

Yet, affable and communicative as he seems, there has always been about this parrot a certain air of mystery; a wise, sly look, keen, observant, "'cute;" a something reserved, self-contained, diplomatic. He was like a feathered despatch-bag, or secretary's portfolio, actually swelling with state secrets. I feel assured that his astute master must have debarred from his presence all newspaper reporters lest, in some unguarded moment, hints of great enterprises and important treaties should drop untimely from his bill.

This clever parrot has a female companion; a pretty, amiable-looking bird, whose cage used to stand close beside his, and with whom he seemed to be on excellent terms, showing her, in his lofty way, marks of "distinguished consideration." Madame seldom talks, but she sings finely, is truly a feathered prima donna of extraordinary talent; yet she seldom sings alone, preferring to join with her friend in astonishing musical performances. From the tranquil character of the intercourse of this pair, from the fact of her silence, and his politeness, I infer that their relations are not matrimonial. A Platonic sentiment unites them in a peaceful and philosophic friendship,—Franklin and

the widow of Helvetius, Chateaubriand and Madame Récamier.

I once took some merry children to see these marvellous parrots. It was a dreary winter day, in the fag-end of Johnson's administration; and we found them alone, and quite in the dumps, considering their freedom from cares and perplexities, domestic and political. Our coming evidently brightened and inspired them, for they went through their entire *repertoire* for our amusement. M. Parrot laughed, coughed, whistled, cried, and asked repeatedly after our health. Mme. Parrot listened well pleased, plumed herself, bustled about, ate the cake we offered her, drank to our health, and graciously informed us that she was "Pretty Polly."

The children sung for them a verse of "Comin' through the Rye." Both paid rapt attention, and, after one repetition, reproduced the air with really wonderful accuracy. Madame, though her manner seemed to say, "By your leave, Monsieur P.," proved herself the best singer by far, having in her voice some tones strangely human.

A cage of lovely South-American parrakeets were brought into the library, and placed beside them. The parrots regarded them very complacently, but, on our appearing too much absorbed by them, showed signs of impatience and

displeasure, and redoubled their efforts to please and astonish us.

While thus on exhibition, one of the pretty parrakeets having, it may be, her little head turned by excitement, was seized by sudden vertigo or fit, staggered, and tumbled forward on her beak, then went ploughing over the carpet, round and round, in a most distressing way. But I am sorry to say that those superior creatures, the parrots, showed no alarm at this small epileptic attack, and no joy at the recovery of the little sufferer. While it fluttered most wildly about, head down and tail up, Madame betrayed, perhaps, a mild interest; but Monsieur whistled coolly on.

"What was Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her?"

The secretary's parrot, like the secretary himself, has a wonderful memory. He has always been fond of a certain lovable lady, connected with the family; and during the early part of the war, when he frequently heard the "Song of John Brown," he took the fancy to hail the sight of her by invariably singing out, "Glory, glory, hallelujah!" as the only adequate expression of his fervent delight. This lady, after an absence of some years, lately visited the secretary; and, immediately on her entering the library,

her friend in green and scarlet gave a joyous laugh, and shouted out the old greeting, "Glory, glory, hallelujah!"

Ah! what persons and what scenes may not this strange little creature remember! Once, when regarding him with the peculiar, curious interest I have in his kind, while he sat for a few minutes quite silent and motionless, perhaps dreaming, pondering, remembering, I asked myself such questions as these: "Does he ever faintly recall a time of hurry and alarm in this household, when the beloved master was brought home hurt, and borne up those stairs; when every morning he missed his great friend's kindly salutation as something pleasant taken out of his narrow life? Does he recall the incessant coming and going of doctors and visitors for many days? Does he remember one hurried, long, yet weary step in the hall; one pale, worn, homely face, looking in upon him; one kindly voice, which gave him jolly greetings now and then? Is he never visited by confused memories of one dreadful night, when there came an awful unbidden guest, stealing up, and leaping down those stairs; when there were wild cries, and the sounds of mortal struggle, above him; when that house almost rocked with the shock of a great tragedy? Did the bird sleep as usual, that night, when the very air

seemed to shudder with terror, and the winds to cry to all the city,—

"Sleep no more!

Treason does murder sleep"?

The creature seemed certainly to possess something very like affection; and I could but ask myself, "Is it not possible that he sometimes recalls a sweet, gracious household presence, martyred and sainted, one who moved softly, spoke gently, and had a kindly word for all? that he may still watch and wait for yet another, a fair young girl, to whose prematurely sad thoughts his merry mockeries gave sometimes pleasant diversions?"

Who can tell? The bird-life has mysteries upon which we may not trench. But evidently the tragedy that has made that house historical, and the sorrow that has rendered it sacred, did not greatly depress his spirit, or darken his views of life. He was almost always merry and jocund; and the sad conditions of human mortality seemed to touch him but lightly.

He is gone now, with his master, and his master's beloved family; and, before that hospitable mansion on Lafayette Square, the memorial sentinel stalks no more.

Wherever thou art now, prince of parrots and gossips, I greet thee lovingly!

"Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert!"

Peace go with thee, and with thy master; who, whatever men may grant or deny him, however partisans may differ as to his political course, certainly possessed, in an eminent degree, "the genius to be loved;" who bore joy and sorrow, success and failure, glory and detraction, with rare dignity, cheerfulness, and philosophy.

If at times when momentous and solemn issues were to be met,—at times of peril and excitement,—this dignity seemed even to his old friends like cool indifference, this cheerfulness like political *persiftage*, this philosophy too like an easy optimism, there was no unkindness in our hearts, as there was no reproach in our thoughts. Whatever he may think, we are not forgetful of his great past.

Where he went on that first long holiday of his busy life, to the other half of our Siamesed continent, to visit the South-American empires and republics, and to the great countries of the round globe, it is pleasant to remember that cordial welcomes, and most honorable entertainment, proved that his foreign relations had not been purely diplomatic.

Did the favorite parrot go with him as courier, or did he have a secretary-bird?

AN OLD FAMILY FRIEND.



AN OLD FAMILY FRIEND.

A STORY TOLD FOR A POET.



DO not remember, my dear and gracious friend, that among the family stories and anecdotes to which you lent an indulgent ear in "the days that are no more," — when.

perhaps, we rested from summer rambles on the hills above A—, or on the lovely banks of the Merrimack; river and shore shimmering in the golden autumn sunlight; or when, "snow-bound," we sat around the open fire in the pleasant little library, the dear mother, E—, and you, and I,—I do not remember that I ever told you of the noble old dog, whose memory with us has been ten-

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derly cherished for many years, whose life has grown into a beautiful family tradition; for, you see, he lived and died before your friend G. G. was born, a long time ago, for she is — but no matter!

It may be —as you well knew that I was to be a dear lover of the race in general, and that to mention any member of the Canina family was to set me off on a dog-trot of wonderful anecdote and reminiscence—that you always bore in mind the hospitable Pompeiian warning, "Cave Canem," and adroitly pushed the idle drift of my talk clear of Newfoundland and Skye; and so I never got to tell you the story of dear old Bose. But is it too late now? To lift the character and fortunes of a poor dog up to the level of a poet's sympathies may seem to many a very ambitious and difficult undertaking; but we know better.

Now, let us begin the story in the regular, orthodox way:—

One tempestuous winter evening, in the year 18—, a merry and loving family circle closed about a deep, old-fashioned fireplace, in a large brown house, on the high street of the beautiful village of B——, in the State of Connecticut. In the centre of this circle sat the father, a man yet in the full vigor of life, and of a sweet and gracious presence. He was the village physician. Beside

him sat his wife, a true gentlewoman, with a baby on her knee; and as near to him as they could conveniently get were his three sons, — fine, promising boys, destined to fulfil all they promised. Then, "if you count girls," there were five fair daughters, including the baby, ranging from eighteen years to as many months. The second of those daughters, in age, was my mother, from whose lips I have learned my little story by heart.

A furious storm of snow and sleet had been raging for some hours, constantly increasing in violence, till the stanch house shook on its solid foundations, and the sturdy old walnut beside it seemed to cry out in pain and dismay, as its limbs were twisted and tortured and broken by the cruel nor'easter.

But above the wild shouts of the tempest, and the wailing remonstrance of the trees; above the good doctor's pleasant, story-telling voice; above the laughter and comments of the children and mamma's gentle chiding, was heard, in the early evening, the heavy rumble of wheels coming up the frozen highway. Then the children, not being under very severe discipline, broke ranks and ran to the window, through which, after breathing on the panes and rubbing vigorously for a while, they could dimly perceive several huge covered vans slowly passing, each drawn

by four or five horses. These heavy vehicles were recognized by the children as "Jersey wagons," then used by merchants, as the only means for transporting goods from seaport and river towns to all points inland. The children, to whom they were familiar objects, beheld them with little To them a wagon packed with the merchandise of distant continents "a wagon was, and nothing more." Had they been poets, like you and — Mr. Longfellow, they might have bethought them how the ends of the earth were coming together at the foot of their lawn; how India, China, Araby, and "the golden South Americas," were setting in upon bleak New England, on that winter night. As it was, as soon as the last van had lumbered by, they closed ranks again around the fire, with only a few words of kindly commiseration for the poor teamsters and horses. But just as papa, with a "Where was I?" was about to take up again his wondrous story, - one of the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments," - just as his eager listeners were preparing to marvel, to laugh, exult, or shudder deliciously, there came another interruption. This time it was in the form of a timid scratch and a low whine at the outer door. Every heart present responded to the piteous appeal; but the good doctor spoke before the most impulsive of his children, "It is some poor, stray dog: let him in at once!"

The next moment the door was flung open, and there tumbled in, like a small avalanche, a big, shaggy dog; white, with here and there a black spot on his coat, which now glittered with snow and ice. He was almost perishing, "starved with the cold" as our English cousins say; indeed, so benumbed that he rather crawled than walked to the hearth, where he laid himself down, panting and moaning. After becoming a little warmed and rested, he raised his head, and glanced with a pair of singularly fine dark eyes from face to face, with an expression of the most intent and curious observation. He was evidently making up his estimate of the family character. Apparently, it was favorable; for after a few moments he rose, and with amiable salutes of his handsome white tail, which he waved in air like a flag of truce, he passed from one to another of the family group, beginning with the doctor, paid his respects. and made his acknowledgments. Then the children brought him food, which he ate with much apparent relish, but, like a well-bred dog, without greediness. Afterward he returned thanks in a happy, hearty way, which we "Christian dogs," as the Mohammedan calls us, would not do ill to imitate. Then he was permitted to stretch himself before the fire till his shaggy coat was thoroughly dry. Indeed, he was allowed to remain on the hearth all that

night, as he still showed signs of great exhaustion, and frequently shivered, as with vivid recollections of the intense cold without.

In the morning "Richard was himself again," strong and brisk, and overflowing with the most engaging friend-liness. Inquiries for the owner of the dog were made in several directions, but without result. No one came, then or afterward, to claim him. It is very possible that the rude teamster, whose faithful thrall he had been, saw in the noble and handsome creature only a brute,—something to swear at, to exact service of, or beat at his pleasure. He certainly never got at the great, loving heart of the dog, or he would never have lost him.

As for the waif, he seemed perfectly contented and happy in his new home; apparently feeling that his roving days were over, that it was "good to be here," that this was the blessed haven to which he had been led through much tribulation, steering by the dog-star of his destiny.

There was no little discussion as to a name for the new member of the household. He was put through a long and rigorous cross-examination, but would only respond to the brief and plebeian dog-nomen of "Bose." When they came to that, there was an instant affirmative wag of the tail. The children were a little dissatisfied, and proposed to re-christen him with something more grand and poetic. "Hector," "Cæsar," "Nero," and "Prince" were tried on; but he would have none of them. Nothing fitted him but "Bose;" so Bose it was. But at last the name grew to be almost beautiful to them, for his dear sake; for he soon proved himself to be a dog not only of uncommon cleverness and intelligence, almost literally understanding every thing that was said to him, but of the most admirable character, brave, faithful, and passionately loving. He was a most magnanimous creature, never using the power which his superior size and strength gave him over

" Mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
And dogs of low degree,"

in any unfair or tyrannous way. Especially was he always tender and chivalrous toward young children. However much those capricious little despots might seek to disturb or tease him, infinite patience and graciousness looked upon them from out his large brown eyes, more in blessing than rebuke.

He became very fond of my grandmother, and of all the sons and daughters of the house; but to my grandfather he attached himself with a peculiar and extraordinary devotion. He accompanied him on all his professional visits, at all hours, in all weathers. In dark, wet nights, he led the way for him cautiously and surely, his white tail waving upright, almost doing service as a lantern. In cases of serious illness, let the good doctor ride ever so fast, Bose was always his avant-courier; and many an anxious eye looking out of the sick-room, and catching sight of the noble creature, has blessed him as the forerunner of aid and comfort.

My grandfather was an enthusiastic sportsman; and on rare golden holidays, when no humblest human life hung trembling on his care and skill, he delighted to take his gun, and call his dog, and go forth among the hills, shooting and to shoot. Bose was not only a jolly comrade, agile and wide awake, but a well-trained retriever. When, after their return at night, the sportsman displayed the contents of a well-filled game-bag, and related the day's adventures, his "ancient" always stood by, looking and listening, with a certain graciously affirmative expression, which seemed to say, "All of which I saw, and a part of which I was." After supper he would invariably fall asleep on the hearth, to "hunt in dreams," to sniff at viewless rabbit-burrows, and follow his airy game.

Within a few years after the adoption of Bose, three of the doctor's daughters were married. The eldest settled in her native village; the two younger removed to the famous old town of L —.

The bustle and gayety of these wedding-times had an evident effect on the spirits of the dog Bose. He was very busy, and pleasantly exalted, genial toward all the guests, patronizing to the bridegroom; rejoicing with those who rejoiced, in a human, almost a Christian way. And when those gay, sad days were over, he seemed to miss the dear ones gone, and to cling all the closer to those who remained, especially to his beloved master. Alas! that affectionate companionship drew near its close. On one of his long night-rides, during a cold rain-storm in early May, the good doctor took a severe cold; and symptoms of fever soon manifested themselves. Unfortunately, or with a rashness as incomprehensible as fatal, he trusted his case to his two young medical students; who, however, assumed the momentous charge with the most cheerful confidence. In the light of their science and experience, it seemed a slight affair, and the patient ought not to have grown worse; but he did. Still, as he was singularly quiet and uncomplaining, little anxiety was felt by his family for several days, and none by his physicians. They two, with a full magazine of drugs at command, came up valiantly to the help of Disease against Nature; and, though the citadel

, 5

of a great, strong life was bravely defended, three against one conquered at last. Yet my grandfather seemed to have from the first a feeling that he should not recover. One lovely morning after the storm, as he sat looking out of his window into the garden, where the peach-trees were in bloom, he said, "How beautiful is this season! too beautiful to close one's eyes upon."

Poor, faithful Bose, unsupported by science, seemed all along disturbed and restless with a vague, unfamiliar trouble; haunting the sick-room, waiting, ah! so hungrily, for a low word of recognition, or a feeble pat upon the head; watching the dear changing face, with a wistful lovingness that almost yearned itself into speech. When the sad end came, as all too speedily it did, his grief, though not noisy or demonstrative, was touching in the extreme; beside the bed of death with the weeping watchers, no one denying his right to be there; beside the coffin with the mourners, his great dark eyes looking strangely solemn, with a visible expression of a struggle to comprehend the mystery of all this dreary change and loss, the dear master's weakness and suffering, and then the stillness and silence

At the time of the funeral services, it was thought best to confine the dog in one of the closed rooms of the house. But by some desperate effort he made his escape; and, when the hearse moved from the church towards the cemetery, there was Bose, walking slowly beside it, every now and then glancing sadly up at its dark burden. He kept his place till the procession reached the grave, till the coffin was let down into it. Then he seemed greatly distressed; but was easily quieted by the voice of one of the family, for he was the very soul of loyal obedience. He retired with the widow and her children to the home out of which had gone its chief brightness and joy, its best earthly defence. The poor creature seemed to try to comfort them, that sorrowful night; going from one to another, licking their hands, and laying his head in their laps. But it was noticed that he made no search for his lost master. He knew where they had laid him.

The next morning he was missed for some hours; and, when he came home, it was remarked by the family that he looked more hopelessly dejected than ever. For theirs was a generous sorrow, that could notice and pity the grief of a poor dog, who had eaten of the crumbs of kindness and affection that fell from his master's table.

The next day, and for several days after, the dog was missed for an hour or two, coming home each time looking worn and wretched. At last one of the sons watched for

his going out, and followed him, cautiously, at a distance. He went to the cemetery, to the grave of his master. My uncle quietly drew near, and, screened by a clump of evergreens, observed him. He had laid himself down beside the mound, with his head upon it, and was whining in a peculiar, coaxing way, with which he usually attracted attention. After a few moments he ceased to whine, and began to scratch frantically, tearing away the turf. Then crouching still closer, he lay quite still, apparently listening and waiting. But no answer coming from the dear voice, no response from the kind hand, he flung his head backward, and lifted up his voice in an "exceeding bitter cry." Then his young master came forward, and kneeling by the grave, with one arm flung over the neck of that humble mourner, sorrowed with him. When, at last, he rose, he pointed to the mound, and gently reproved the dog for disturbing the turf. Poor Bose hung his head, and seemed to consider deeply; and his young master knew, that, obedient as constant, he would never offend in that way again. Then they went home together.

After this, efforts were made to wean the dog from the grave; and he seemed gradually to take home to his poor mute, unreasoning heart the stern fact that his master would never arise from that low bed, would never more

heed his piteous cry. He gave up; but for him the spring and gladness had gone out of life. He was still gentle, loving, and sympathetic; but that exuberant dog-gayety, which before expressed itself in gambols and bounds, in frisky, waggish ways, and in little running musical barks wonderfully like human laughter, had departed. Through a sense unknown to us, he had guessed out the awful mystery of death; through love, he had tasted one drop of the bitter cup of our humanity.

After the great change, came lesser changes in my grandmother's household. The eldest son, who had adopted his father's profession, married, and removed to N—, in Massachusetts, some thirty miles away; and the eldest son-in-law came to reside in the old homestead. To him and his family, Bose extended his fealty; but his widowed mistress had still and always his most loving and watchful devotion.

As he got on in years, the desire for travel and change, which often comes to old people, came to this most quiet and domestic of dogs; and he was one morning missed from the comfortable kennel from which he usually kept guard over the premises. As that day, and several days following, passed without his appearing, the family became anxious, and made inquiries in every direction; but in vain.

He seemed to have gone as mysteriously as he came. At length there arrived a letter from the young doctor, stating that Bose had reached his house in N—— on the very morning after leaving home; that he seemed weary and footsore, but very happy to see him and his family. How the faithful creature had found his way, in the night, by roads he had never before travelled, was a mystery the most learned could not solve at that time. Perhaps, in this day of advanced science, it could be easily enough explained.

Hard on the letter came back Bose himself, to be joyfully welcomed, petted, and respected more than ever. After a brief rest, he again disappeared, taking French leave as before. This time he did not go to N——, but to L——, on a visit to my mother and her sister. He came in upon each household like a whole "surprise-party," seeming to enjoy immensely the sensation he created. He divided his time with rigid impartiality between the two families, and, before he had worn out his welcome with either, returned to his old home.

These visitations were repeated two or three times a year while Bose lived. Indeed, he became quite a travelled adventurer, a knight-errant.

I wish I could tell that this beloved family friend died peacefully at last, in his good old age, with his wistful gaze fixed to the latest moment on loved faces, or with dear voices speaking comfort to him, as the coming-on of the great night darkened those gentle eyes, out of which no baleful passion had ever gleamed, which had never looked a lie. But the sad truth must be told.

In the vicinity of B—, there arose one of those wild panics which sometimes rage in country neighborhoods, caused by a malicious or mischievous cry of "Mad dog!" and ending in a great slaughter of canine innocents. Men, too mad themselves to be at large, cowardly and reckless as Ku-Klux bravos, went about with pistols and guns, shooting every dog that came in their way,—and so poor Bose!

He was quite dead when my uncles found him, shot through his great, loyal heart. It was thought he had not suffered much.

Many were the tears shed over him, and tenderly was he laid in the earth. Poor, unlearned Indians would have laid him at his master's feet; but such are heathen customs.

That the loving instinct which once led him alone through the night, by unknown paths, to his young master, was vital and divine enough to survive the murderous shot, and to guide him, by the mysterious ways of a higher life, straight to the dearer old master, I need not affirm that I believe. But who will presume to say it was not?

THE STORY OF A HORSE.



THE STORY OF A HORSE.

N a late article by Mrs. Stowe on that excellent domestic convenience, "A Handy Man," I find the following paragraph:—

"A woman who lives in the country may sometimes be able to save a life by knowing how to harness or drive a horse. It is, of course, not a proper feminine employment; but it is a thing quite easily learned, and the knowledge of which may come in play in exigencies."

I am surprised that so sensible and practical a woman as Mrs. Stowe can make such a concession to the old, sentimental idea of feminine pursuits and proprieties. It seems that she would have a woman learn to buckle on a harness, and handle a whip and reins, not from a hearty, wholesome love of horses, but actually from a religious sense of duty, in order that she may be able to "save a life" in some possible emergency, by "tackling up," and going for the doctor, the fire-engine, or the "milingtary."

Now, this is a dreadfully philanthropic way of considering the matter. What is the use of tinkering away at a pleasure, to make a duty of it? — of spoiling good wine by mixing it with bitters?

I would harness and drive, saddle, bridle, ride, and be much with horses, because I love them. In my honest opinion, a woman is no more out of her place in the stable than in the garden. Horticulture may be a daintier employment than horsiculture (if I may be allowed to coin a word); but it contributes less to, because drawing less on, the sympathetic, affectional nature of woman. I truly believe that the love and care of a fine horse would have a strengthening and ennobling influence on the character of any true woman. On this extreme ground I take my stand, against a world of proprieties.

I have always been inclined to credit the account which makes Joan of Arc a stable-girl. There was that in her of fire and dash and splendid daring which only equine communion and companionship can inspire. In all that best fitted her for her wonderful, anomalous career, she learned more from horses than homilies. Supernal influences guided her, but equinal energies entered into her blood and muscles.

For me, the actual daily care of a horse were far from a hardship. It may be a coarse employment, but it is congenial. I never was feminine enough to tend a canary, or clean house for an old gossip of a parrot; but I can look after the comforts and decencies of a stall most faithfully. I never could comb or curl a French poodle; but I can groom a horse, upon occasion, and after a fashion.

I once — ah, me, so many years ago! — made a fair trial of my capacities in that direction. On returning to my quiet Western home, from the East, in midwinter, I found a new inmate of the stable, — a wild, wicked-looking, unkempt young chestnut sorrel, from Indiana.

This stranger from Posey County, whence we might expect the very flower of Indianian horseflesh, "the expectancy and rose of the fair State," was by no means a handsome animal, though he had some good points. His pedigree had been made no account of, even in his sale. His sire was to fame unknown, and his dam was of low degree. Yet I felt assured that there was some good blood in the creature; which blood had evidently a "determina-

tion to the head," for that was spirited, and almost beautiful. He had large, watchful, warning eyes, fiery nostrils, and small, taper ears, which seemed not only sensitive to a degree, but sentient. They were like little spires, into which his hot, quick spirit flamed up, and there threatened and quivered. They were unfailing indices of his mood, be it savage or serene.

His neck, though a little heavy, was finely arched; but here the patrician stuff gave out. The *tout ensemble* was a rough, powerful, long-limbed, strong-willed, Ishmaelitish, unregenerate animal, of the sort which no proper young lady should have any thing to do with.

At the time I made his acquaintance, he was incarnate rebellion. He had never been in harness, and but a few times under saddle. He disliked being pent up, and was evidently bored by the solitude and restraints of the stable. He expended his nervous energies mostly in kicking,—lashing out in all directions, and thundering away at the walls of the stable in gallant style.

When I first entered his stall, he endeavored to intercept my advance by a flank movement; but I was too quick for him. With my arm around his neck, I made immediate interest with him by means of a huge lump of sugar. He evidently had a sweet tooth, answering to a soft spot in his

heart; for at once his fierce eye softened, while the laidback ears came quivering up and forward in a pretty, pacific way that was most engaging.

From that day I paid morning and evening visits to the stable, and soon found myself welcomed with a joyous neigh. How pleasant that was, I need not tell a true lover of horses. My pet showed himself as playful as he had before been sullen. He would steal sugar from the pocket of my apron, play bo-peep with me, bite my arm, and tumble my hair, with many other endearing and delightful tricks. One joke, which was never stale with him, was to snatch off the hat from my head, and swing it high in the air. Once when, to tease him, I wore no hat, he caught a large comb from its place, and swung it aloft.

But for my actual groom-service. Our only stable-man was a small boy; who, being not a little afraid of his charge, performed his duties but imperfectly. Then, all unlearned in the mystery of the art I would teach, guided only by woman's divine intuitions, I took it on me to instruct the lad, sponge and curry-comb in hand.

Well, it must out. I actually grew so fond of that unladylike, improper business, that for a time I took it out of the boy's hands, leaving to him the still ruder work of cleaning the stall, which he went through with daily, like a little Hercules.

It was really curious to mark the change wrought in that horse by a few weeks of such care and tending. He grew to be almost handsome. His coat became soft and sleek, his mane glossy and flowing, and his limbs looked daintily clean. The Hoosier of him disappeared; and there was about him a general air of gallantry and jauntiness. I taught him to raise his feet for my inspection at a word. Sometimes, as I crouched before him, he would lift a foot, and place it on my hand or arm, where it would rest light as the caress of love.

All these proceedings were immensely amusing to my little Irish assistant. Not long ago I saw an account of them in a Southern newspaper, taken down from his lips by some journalist who was no despiser of small gossip about small people.

In this narrative it is stated that I frequently oiled, brushed, and braided the mane and tail of my horse, and then tied them with blue ribbons! Here Ananias steps into the account. I did oil and brush the mane and forelock; but not the tail, as I am a living woman! And I own to the braiding, but I deny the blue ribbons.

What fast, dear friends we grew to be, my horse and I!

He would know me in any disguise, or in the dark. He would follow me about, up and down banks and steps. At a word from me, he would come out of a frenzy of fright or anger. And there was something wonderfully pleasant and sustaining to me in the mute good-fellowship of the big, ungainly fellow. More than once, when oppressed by the vague sadness and discouragement that comes to one in the twilight, I have leaned my head against his neck for a good, comfortable cry. And though he stood still, and "munched and munched," I half interpreted the little nervous thrills, that now and then agitated the glossy coat under my cheek, as tokens of benign pity for my womanly condition.

Yet my friend and confessor was no general lover of the sex. His fealty was not transferable. No other woman could ride him with safety. He really enjoyed a bad reputation. He was an excellent animal to keep to lend to one's friends.

During the spring, summer, and autumn months, we two explored all the hills, woods, and gorges of a wild, picturesque region. We forded streams, climbed steeps, descended into dark ravines; we were off together in the early mornings, in "night and storm and darkness."

In lonely woodland places I used to practise myself in

64

all sorts of perilous, barbaric horseback exercises; he always bearing me home afterward with a demure and honest countenance. Discreetest of comrades!

In the mean time, several attempts had been made to break this horse to the harness, but without success. He chose to do the breaking himself; in fact, did such a heavy business in that line as to defy all competition.

I was finally obliged to leave home, to enter on some literary enterprise; and with me went my poor comrade's chief occupation. I consented that he should be sold, the less reluctantly from the fact that I did not own the horse, he being the property of another member of the family. In fact, I don't think that my consent was asked. He was sold as a saddle-horse; yet his rash purchaser, despising all warning and advice, immediately went to work to attach him to a light buggy, only to have that piece of property dissolve before his eyes. Heavier vehicles went to swift destruction in the same way; and then did that pitiless man, bent upon subjugation, hit upon a cruel expedient. He put Pegasus to his last humiliation. He coolly proceeded to harness my precious pet to a canal-boat; saying, with a dreadful oath, "That'll fetch him!"

The horse, it was said, gave one sharp, intelligent look at the monstrous clog to which he was attached; then, with a wild plunge, tossed his small rider over his head, and dashed forward at a furious rate. He actually ran away with that canal-boat! But he did not run far before he fell or threw himself over a high embankment down on a heap of rocks, "struck death into his brain," and so died.

I was touched by his tragic end, but I gloried in his spirit.

I, perhaps, am not the judge. But I cannot think that I am any the less womanly for having performed amateur groom-service for that horse; for having fed and watered, saddled and bridled him; for having rubbed him down from forelock to fetlock. I believe that one can be as true a woman in the *manege* as in the *menage*. It is our love for any work that gives it dignity and propriety.

"The labor one delights in physics pain."



A HARROWING RECITAL.

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A HARROWING RECITAL.



YEAR or two ago, while travelling in Illinois, I saw a farmer careering across a fifty-acre wheat-field, on a McCormick reaper, drawn by a pair of magnificent bays; and I thought

to myself it was about the jolliest way of pursuing the agricultural calling that could well be imagined. It was taking the edge off the primeval curse, and making a pleasure of a toil.

In my childhood, which was mostly spent on a farm in the State of New York, there were no such labor savers and alleviators. Then work was work,—the pure, old, tough, Adamitic article. Then the idea of riding a-field would have seemed preposterous and wild; though I remember to have had, when a little midget, a treat of the kind, occasionally, in being allowed by an indulgent elder brother to ride before him on the cross-piece of the plough, and even, for a few minutes at a time, to hold the reins. No Scythian Amazon on a burnished war-chariot could have been more triumphant than was I at such times, though the seat was a little hard and precarious.

Once, I remember, I was allowed to ride the horse used; in ploughing between the rows in the cornfield. I felt a very agreeable sense of importance. But the way I travelled over was rough and rather monotonous; the weather was hot; even the walk of the old farm-horse was hard, particularly as I rode without a saddle; and so half a day of pleasure and industry combined sufficed for me.

I well remember the farm implements of that day; clumsy, ponderous affairs, made to last a lifetime, and tax the strength of a Hercules. The spades, hoes, and rakes were no playthings for the gardening young ladies and Maud Mullers of those times. The pitchforks, it seems to me, were especially rude and portentous, with demoniac suggestions for youthful minds. But the ugliest, most frightful-looking thing about the farmyard was the harrow; for thereby hung a tale of melancholy and of tragic import.

My youngest brother, the darling of the family, once became the proud owner of a colt, which had been born on the child's fourth birthday. The little fellow innocently asked if he and the colt were not twins. This pretty birthday present throve finely, and at two years old was considered a very promising, though a rather odd-looking animal. He was a sorrel, with white feet, a white star on his forehead, a white mane, and a most voluminous silvery tail. He was mild-tempered, playful, and intelligent, a great pet with all the household. My little brother's heart was bound up in this equine friend. To him the animal was more than Black Bess was to Dick Turpin, than Dexter is to Bonner. He used to say that some day he was going to ride forth into the world on that long-tailed sorrel to seek his fortune, and that he should come galloping home, in about ten years, with a couple of bags of dollars hanging from the saddle, and a pretty little wife riding on another long-tailed sorrel at his side.

No colt was born on my luckless birthday; but a certain red-and-white calf was, for a time, considered my peculiar property, I having begged her off from the butcher by pledging myself to care for and feed her regularly. This calf was lodged at night in the carriage-house, a good-sized building, in which were stored many of the farm implements. Hoes and rakes depended from the walls; the rafters were festooned with ropes and harnesses; the big beam was bestrid by saddles. The one-horse family wagon, and the doctor's sulky, occupied the central part; but in one corner stood a plough, and in another, leaning up against the wall, with his ugly dragon-teeth all displayed, was the harrow.

One autumn night we had guests from a distance, — "carriage people," — and had also taken in that now almost extinct animal, a peddler. This was a very respectable man, who drove a double team, and afterwards became a wealthy New York merchant. With all the strange horses, our stable was so full that the sorrel colt had to be taken from his stall, and put for safe keeping into the carriage-There the stupid "hired man" tied him to the My reader, I doubt not, partly anticipates the tragic result. In the night, while trying to lie down, probably, poor Sultan pulled that frightful thing over upon him, and fell under it. Its cruel teeth pierced his breast, one of them penetrating to the lungs, inflicting, of course, a fatal wound. Yet that was not all: in falling, he threw down his little companion, the calf; and unable, by the most frantic efforts, to extricate himself from the heavy weight of iron and timber, he soon crushed the life out of the poor young creature beneath him.

The colt was found alive in the morning; and even when relieved of his cruel burden, and helped to his feet, was able to stand, though bleeding profusely, and breathing with great difficulty. He looked around on us all, with a piteous, wistful expression in his beautiful dark eyes, while his almost human moans pierced our hearts.

My father decided at once that our pet and playfellow could not live, and that his sufferings must be mercifully shortened. He was to be shot, and the careless hired man was to be his executioner. So we children all bade him good-by, with embraces and tears, and retired to the hayloft till all was over. We heard the shot, though we had resolutely stopped our ears, and our grief burst forth afresh.

"I shall have to go tramping off afoot to seek my fortune now," sobbed out the bereaved little master of the long-tailed sorrel.

We afterward heard that blundering John put such a heavy charge into the old musket that it kicked, and knocked him over; and that was some comfort to us.

This is why I have a horror of the harrow. It seems to me a very engine of death, a sort of rural Juggernaut.

MAC'S RIDE.

MAC'S RIDE.



N the spring of 1865 a clerk in one of the departments at Washington, "a young man by the name of" McGuire, but familiarly known as "Mac," applied, through a friend to the

provost-marshal for a pass, in order to cross the Potomac for a ride. He had been ill, and required the recreation for his health. He received the pass, and dashed gayly off toward Georgetown; presenting, on that occasion, quite a gallant appearance for a civilian, being handsomely dressed with a half-military hat, cavalry boots, and silver spurs, and being mounted on a fleet and fiery steed. The day was beautiful as only an early spring day can be in Washington; and as our cavalier passed into the suburbs, and out into the country, the delicate scent of the springing grass under foot, and of the bursting buds overhead, the healing balm of the air, the tender warmth of the sunshine, the light and easy action of his horse, all filled and thrilled him with a fine joy of convalescence. But, just in the

height of his joyances, his annoyances began. He had turned a little aside from the road to water his horse at a spring; and, while he halted there, a stranger, who had been following him for some little time, rode up, looked at him sharply, and then brusquely asked who he was, and where he was going. "I do not know that it is any of your business, sir, nor what authority you have to question me." This was said rather savagely. The stranger seemed a little alarmed, and, putting spurs to his horse. galloped back towards Georgetown, while Mac continued his way toward the Chain-bridge. He had scarcely made a half-mile when he heard horses galloping behind him; and presently two Federal officers dashed past, wheeled. and faced him, with cocked pistols and menacing countenances. Mac drew rein in angry astonishment, and was about to demand the reason of this banditti-like proceeding, when one of the officers seemed to recognize him, and laughing said, "Excuse me: I took you for another man." The three then rode on together, pleasantly chatting, crossed the Chain-bridge, passed Fort Marcy, and went some three or four miles beyond, out into old, desolated Suddenly Mac perceived that a change had come o'er the spirit of the day. It grew sombre, and a little chill, with prospects of rain; and, taking leave of his

companions, he turned, and rode homeward at full speed. So intent was he on getting back with a dry skin, that he dashed through Fort Marcy, and down the hill toward the Chain-bridge, without drawing rein. Coming to a fork of the road, he noticed some cavalry, halted, but held on his way; and though he presently heard them galloping behind him, not dreaming that they could have any thing to do with him, he kept bravely on till he also heard pistol-shots, and bullets began to whiz around his ears. Then, thinking that matters were getting a little serious, he wheeled, and found he was being pursued by a whole company of cavalry. He threw up his hands in token of surrender. His pursuers dashed up, and formed a hollow square about him, while the officer in command saluted him with a sort of grim courtesy, and addressed him as colonel. "Colonel!" exclaimed our innocent civilian, now thoroughly irritated: "what in thunder do you mean?" and I am sorry to say that he then, and at other times during that trying day, made use of some strong expressions which he never learned at Sunday school. "Who do you take me to be?" he fiercely demanded. The officer smiled a "wise, slow smile." "Ah, I know you very well, colonel. We all know you. There is but one of your sort. How's your health, colonel? wounds quite healed, I hope. Fine horse that; and you ride him gallantly, by Jove!"

Mac, for all answer, triumphantly produced his pass. Another knowing smile from the captain of cavalry, as he examined it. "Good name in Washington. May I ask, colonel, how long you have been McGuire?" Just here a one-eyed Irish soldier, on guard at the bridge, rushed up. discharged at the prisoner a frantic volley of oaths, and claimed the privilege of shooting him on the spot, for having "shot out me eye at Centreville." He actually levelled his musket at Mac, and obliged him to ask the protection of his captors, who commanded the irate Irishman to return to his post, and keep the peace. In a few moments our bewildered hero was allowed to proceed, but with the full cavalry escort. He rode in sullen silence over the bridge he had crossed so gayly that very morning. Arrived on the shore, the captain commanded a halt, and called into anxious consultation a colonel of artillery there stationed. This officer, after keenly and somewhat severely scrutinizing the prisoner, stepped up to him, and said, with an air of stern importance, "Colonel, you will be pleased to dismount here, and walk into town."

"Colonel," responded Mac, with quite as stern and lofty an air, "I shall not be pleased to do any such thing. I have been ill lately, and am not able to walk so far. Besides, my horse is a borrowed one, and I am bound to return it to its owner: moreover, I deny your right to interfere with me in any way. On the whole, I decline to dismount." There followed a whispered consultation among the officers; and finally it was concluded to send the contumacious "colonel," under a double escort of cavalry and infantry, to Georgetown. Arrived here, Mr. McGuire underwent a severe examination before the provost-marshal. That officer seemed to credit his story as little as the others, but to feel for him the sympathy of a generous foeman. "I'll tell you what I'll do for you, colonel," he said: "I'll allow you to dismount, and go into Washington in the horse-car, to avoid publicity, and spare your feelings."

But this gracious consideration was ungraciously received by Mac, who was resolved to stick to his horse. It was a tempting animal, and those were confiscating times. So he was marched on, still with his extraordinary escort of cavalry and infantry, and followed by an excited crowd, to the office of Gen. Auger, then commanding at Washington. There they found Col. Taylor, aide-de-camp, a very polite officer, who said, "Well, colonel, what can I do for you?" By this time Mac was tired of making explanations and asseverations, so only answered, "I am a prisoner; I don't know for what. I have nothing to say." Col. Taylor, not knowing what to do with him, sent

him, still with his escort, to the provost-marshal's office. When put in charge of the officers of that department, he again indignantly demanded to know for what he was held in arrest, and marched about from pillar to post in this ridiculous manner. Here he hardly met with such gentle courtesy as was shown him at the last halting-place. He was advised to refrain from asking questions, or making remarks; good advice, probably, but the form of speech was a little objectionable. It was, "You keep your mouth shut." Then the blood of a freeborn, loyal American citizen was up in our friend Mac, and he answered, "No ninety-three-dollars-a-month man, no military upstart, like you, has a right to order me to keep my mouth shut. I will speak when and as I please; and I again demand an explanation of this outrageous treatment."

This produced some sensation, but both resentment and remonstrance were in vain. Officers and men continued to crowd around the prisoner; some abusing him, some joking and quizzing him.

The next actor that appeared on the scene was a courier, booted and spurred, and covered with dust, who came hurrying in, and handed some papers to the officer in command. While his despatches were being examined, this courier, who was a Virginia scout, proceeded to closely

inspect Mr. McGuire. He then conferred with the officers. who again came about the prisoner, addressed him as "colonel," or "general," asked about the state of his wounds, and advised him to "own up," as everybody recognized him, and his "little McGuire game" was "played He received all these graceful pleasantries in sullen, almost stupefied silence; convinced at last of the fact that his tormentors were too much for him, and that the day's run of luck was against him. At length there came another stir: the cavalry and infantry began to form, and poor Mac learned that he was about to be marched to the Old Capitol Prison. This, in the delicate state of his health, was a little appalling, and he was about to try a few more desperate expostulations, when a friend, an officer of high rank in the War Department, happened in, recognized him, swore stoutly to his identity, and released him on the spot, though a dozen men had been ready to take solemn oath that he wasn't he, but quite another man, a most desirable personage to capture and to hold.

I was reminded of this little story, by a "personal" which appeared in one of our morning papers a week or so ago:—

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[&]quot;Gen. Moseby, late of the Confederate service, is in town, and stopping at the St. Fames."

It was this gallant rebel raider that Mr. McGuire was taken for on that spring day when he went on his memorable pleasure-ride over into Virginia; a ride which, for misadventures and misunderstandings, can only be compared with the immortal equestrian excursion of John Gilpin to Edmonton, and beyond. It was altogether a curious case of mistaken identity; and the stranger whom our friend first encountered on that eventful morning was probably the man who informed on him, and made all the trouble.

SOMETHING ABOUT TOADS.



One of the most distrusted, disliked, and ill-used of reptiles is the toad; yet it is not only a peaceful and harmless citizen of the animal republic, but a very serviceable creature to man, as the destroyer of many noxious insects.

Skilful gardeners are aware of the usefulness of these "tail-less batrachians," as naturalists call toads and frogs; and are glad to employ

them as a police force, to patrol their hot-beds, and snap up ants, bugs, and worms, hurtful to plants.

Entomologists make use of toads as traps to catch cer-

tain rare kinds of beetles, that only venture out at night. In the morning they are constrained by an emetic, or some yet more violent means, to disgorge their yet undigested repasts; a proceeding I should call outrageous, were not great questions and interests of science at stake. From the toad's point of view, it is doubtless a very dirty piece of tyranny.

The toad feeds on insects of all sorts and kinds, not being at all particular, except that its little victim must be alive and stirring. It will not touch the daintiest moth, or the tenderest young fly, if dead. It leaves such prey to a coroner's jury of ants, or Mr. Undertaker Beetle. It remains perfectly still, watching an insect with its brilliant eyes (its sole beauty), till the thoughtless little thing comes within reach of its tongue, which then darts out, and whisks Mr. Fly out of sight in an instant. The play of a toad's tongue is so rapid that your eye cannot follow it: it comes and goes in tiny red flashes, like a small variety of lightning.

The *Bufo vulgaris*, or common toad, is certainly not comely to look upon, nor particularly lovely in his life; but he is neither poisonous nor ill-tempered. He has in some of his wart-like excrescences an acrid fluid, which he can give out on occasion, and which is his sole means of

self-defence. There are two small protuberances just back of the head, that he uses most effectively in this offensive spouting. If a rash dog attacks a toad, and takes him in his mouth as he takes a rat, he is apt to drop him as he would a hot potato, not relishing the stinging dose he gets. But the dog never dies of the bite, though sometimes the toad does.

Many of the old painters, poets, and writers make toads the companions of sorcerers and witches, with snakes and black cats. A toad is the first ingredient that the witches in "Macbeth" fling into the caldron where they are making their diabolical stew. As she tosses him in, the old witch, adding insult to injury, sings,—

"Toad, that under coldest stone
Days and nights hast thirty-one
Sweltered venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first in the charmed pot,"

Now, all this is superstition, and rank poetry. It is no more true that the toad is venomous than that he carries in his head "a rich jewel," as Mr. Shakspeare elsewhere says. He is a steady-going, honest fellow, ugly, but virtuous, and no more takes to witches and sorcerers than you or I. As for keeping company with snakes, I am confident

he doesn't do it, for the very reason that sensible antelopes should decline to associate on intimate terms with anacondas. He knows that a good-sized snake would swallow him without salt or ceremony, — would make no bones of it.

I remember that my brother and I, when we were children, once came across a snake of so portly a shape, and so sluggish in movement, that our suspicions were aroused. We thought there had been some sort of foul play with the young birds of a tree overhead. So my brother, who was destined to be a doctor, fixing the murderer to the ground with split sticks, performed a surgical operation upon him in a manner neat and skilful, and highly satisfactory, at least to the imprisoned prey, — a toad, who hopped out of his disagreeable quarters as brisk as Jonah! Apparently he was none the worse for his adventure, which may have furnished him with a good story for the rest of his life. It may be his friends and toadies grew heartily tired of hearing him start off with, "Speaking of snakes, did you ever hear" -; or, "When I was down in the snake's belly"-

You ask, What about the unfortunate snake? Well, he died, in spite of all the efforts of science. Life made a slow retreat down his whole length, to the tip of his tail,

where it lingered till sundown, then gave a convulsive wriggle, and went out.

Toads are capable of friendly sentiments, and can be domesticated. For several years one lived just under the pantry window at our old homestead, and would come forth from his hole when called, and eat the bread-crumbs that were given to him. It was a damp place, and large toad-stools grew near; and I remember I used to think he sat on them, of course; but I never caught him at it. I believe they are another superstition. This toad was thought to be one of the oldest inhabitants of those parts. He was very stout, seemed stiff and gouty, and had but one eye, which gave him a rather sinister aspect.

Willis, the poet, had at his lovely home, called "Glen-Mary," a pet toad, which haunted, season after season, a particular path through the lawn. When Mr. Willis left this dear spot, he commended his portly protegé to the kind tolerance of the next proprietor; begged him, when mowing the lawn, to remember the poor old toad's whereabouts, and not "slice him up" with the scythe.

I remember a pleasant little story of the Duke of Wellington offering to feed for a week the pet toad of a little friend, while the child was obliged to be absent. Wood, in his Natural History, tells of a pet toad which had lived for

years in a family, and supped daintily every night on lumps of sugar.

There is a great deal that is queer about toads. They seem to have numerous little mouths in their skins, and drink in water that way; which is very convenient when they are shut away from all water except what they can catch in showers. They occasionally shed their ugly skins. They are said to draw the upper portion off over the head, like a shirt; and then they immediately proceed to swallow it. They are great economists, and support no "old-clo'" men.

They are amphibious, but evidently prefer the land to the water, except in the spring; when, after lying torpid all winter in holes, or under stones or stumps, they resort to ponds and streams for the purpose of laying their eggs. These are produced in long strings or clusters, enclosed in a gelatinous substance. Their young are regular tadpoles when hatched in the water; but, when hatched on land, their tails, if they ever have any, are soon discontinued. Nature is very economical. She don't waste eyes on Mammoth-Cave fishes, nor tails and gills on garden-born toads.

But some varieties of toads are queerer than others. There is one kind, found in the vicinity of Paris, the male of which seems to me a model of devotion as a husband and father. He waits upon and even assists the female when she is laying her eggs; then takes them, and fastens them, by small, stem-like strings, to his legs and thighs,—decorates himself with them, as an Indian does with wampum,—and, thus burdened with family cares, he retires to the utmost domestic privacy in his hole, and there remains, keeping the eggs still and warm, brooding them in a sort of way, and taking for food whatever Mrs. Toad chooses to provide. As for her, she goes about at her own pleasure; attends all the "hops" in the neighborhood, and, it may be, comes home now and then, rather late in the morning, to hear poor, meek Mr. Toad ask, with a sigh, "My dear, where have you been?"

When the young arrive at the tadpole stage, the father, who knows the very day, by a sort of almanac of his own, waddles to the nearest piece of water, plunges in, gives a few energetic kicks, and launches them all in life.

But the queerest of all is the Surinam toad. The male and female of this variety also divide their family cares and labors in a very amiable and curious way. As soon as Mrs. Toad of Surinam lays her eggs, Mr. Toad of Surinam takes them, and fastens them with a sort of glutinous matter, of his own invention, to the skin of Mrs.

Toad of Surinam; whose skin, being of an accommodating nature, rises up around each egg, and encloses it in a sort of sac, or pouch, covered on the top by a thin gelatinous veil. There the eggs remain snugly embedded till they pass through the usual changes of growth; are tadpoles a while, but, having no particular use for tails, drop them before descending from the maternal back. When they hop out of their pouches, and begin life in earnest, they are regular toads, of the rare and exclusive family peculiar to Surinam and Guiana.

A prolific female toad of this sort must present a most grotesque appearance, when bearing on her broad back a whole nursery of her offspring, in different stages of development: some yet slumbering unconscious in the egg; some, scarcely knowing whether they are tads or toads, peeping curiously out of their pouches, like so many pappooses; some just ready to make the momentous hop off into the great, dim world of some dark court of Surinam.

Another funny thing is, that some naturalists contend that this toad of Surinam never lays her eggs at all, but sends them by some secret passages, known only to herself, up through her body to her back; that they break out through the skin in a sort of oviferous eruption. I really

cannot decide a matter which learned men differ about; but I am inclined to think that the eggs are laid in the good old way, as I have related. As to the undisputed fact of their being hatched mother-back, I can only say it is the fashion in Surinam.

A COUPLE OF QUEER LITTLE CUSTOMERS.

A COUPLE OF QUEER LITTLE CUSTOMERS.



URING a summer in Washington, two new insects, very curious and quaint little creatures, fell under my observation. The first was the *mantis*, or rear-horse, a species

of grasshopper, which, as its name would imply, has a resemblance to a horse rampant. It has six legs, if the foremost pair, which are serrated, and look like the claws of a lobster, can be called legs. With these it catches insects, and, closing the joints, holds them impaled on the sharp little spines, while it leisurely devours them. It has a long, slender neck, and a small head, the action of which is amusingly like that of a horse, especially when the creature is eating — which it generally is. About the mouth are set small feelers, or tasters, which are constantly in motion; and from between the eyes rise two long, flexible, hair-like horns, which are pricked up or depressed like the ears of a horse. The eyes are ludicrously prominent and wide-awake. If you scratch a rear-horse on the flank, or

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pat his neck, he will turn his head, and regard you with a startling amount of "speculation in those orbs." Like many other odd things, rear-horses are said to be peculiar to this region; are seldom seen north of it, at least. Our late Chinese visitors regarded them with a pensive interest, saying that they had the like of them at home; only, of course, of a larger and handsomer variety. It may be the great sire and dam of our breed was imported from Hong Kong in a tea-chest. Some gigantic poor relations of the rear-horse, called from their extreme attenuation "walking-sticks," or "spectres," and from their destructiveness "warhorses," appear upon the farms of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. These seem to be vegetarians, as they do much mischief by destroying the buds and leaves of trees. A wood has been haunted by these same spectres to the extent of absolute defoliation, till the Dryads cried, "Take any shape but that!"

Rear-horses, on the contrary, are not only harmless, but useful in keeping down the population of noxious insects; yet they, in turn, might give us too much of a good thing, had not Nature devised a check in form of a little ichneumon fly, that often stealthily deposits its eggs in those of the *mantis*, which are thus destroyed. The interloper-fly finds the eggs attached in little brown masses to the

branches of trees, and looking like knots or excrescences. Those that escape the sly little enemy are hatched in June. The young rear-horses are at first very frail and dainty-looking creatures, almost transparent; but even then they are astonishingly voracious. Indeed, a naturalist here asserts that he has known an infant rear-horse or colt of the tender age of three days to capture and devour a full-grown honey-maker without as much as saying, "Bee mine!"

In youth rear-horses mostly appear fittingly apparelled in green, and later on in life don suits of brown and gray; yet I have seen old fellows still "wearing of the green," like Fenians, and very small ones in sober gray, like young Quakers.

After a season of leanness, the *mantis* puts on a portly, well-to-do look, as though he had secured a "fat contract" from Congress. At first, too, he stalks around like a poor lobbyist on foot, "seeking whom he may devour;" but in his better days he takes not a carriage, but wings, with which he dashes about in the upper circles, from tree to tree, making havoc among all smaller insects. In this poetic stage of his career, the rear-horse may remind one of a fairy Pegasus. But the greediness of the creature grows with its growth; and is, I am sorry to say, more

fierce and insatiate in the female than the male. Larger and stronger than her mate, indeed, the rear-mare may be said to be "the better horse." She is, as was said of Wolsey, "of an unbounded stomach." Not even love appears to diminish her a petite. She turns from her wooer to make a meal of a stray miller; and woe to the bee that falls into her clutches, even in the honeymoon!

A very shocking proof of this weakness I am compelled, as a faithful historian, to adduce: she sometimes, in seasons of scarcity and "short commons," devours her own husband!

I have heard of an unfortunate Benedict, who once gave expression to pensive reminiscences and regrets in this wise: "When I was first married, I loved my wife so dearly I could have eaten her; and many times since I've been sorry I didn't do it."

If not quite amiable behavior, is it not wise in Mrs. Mantis to provide against the possibility of any such vain regrets in her domestic life, by making way with her young lord while they are on tolerably good terms, and he is not likely to disagree with her? It may be she pounces upon him as he dozes in the sun after dinner, having feasted on flies of her catching, leaving her only a few wings and drumsticks, and speedily makes an end of him for the good

of the family; for thus will not his substance go to nourish the eggs through which his race is to be perpetuated?

When first caught, the *mantis* is exceedingly wild and restive, rearing back, and striking out in all directions; but it can be subdued and tamed by a judicious course of feeding and petting, without resort to Rarey's strap.

A lady once captured an intelligent female, and kept it for a long time in her room. She taught it to come to her when called, and take flies and bits of raw meat from her fingers. But, though it became quite gentle and quiet, I am sorry to say there was no decrease in its voracity. So it would seem.

"We can call these delicate creatures ours, And not their appetites."

In the autumn, the rear-horse gets so clumsy and heavy, so immoderately corpulent, that his airy wings will no longer support him. He falls to the ground, and is obliged to walk or hop for the remainder of his days, or be trodden under foot of men. The contractor has overreached himself. What sort of an end he makes at last, I have never ascertained; whether he dies of a small variety of equine apoplexy, or goes off in a galloping consumption. But there comes a time, doubtless, when Washington life grows

as wearisome to him as to a poor loyal man with a claim against government; when he feels the frosts and infirmities of age; when the grasshopper in him is a burden; when the horse of him rears and prances no more; when his race is run, and he vanishes from the earth.

My second queer customer is a sort of caterpillar, found hereabouts on the leaves of fruit-trees. This small new acquaintance, whose name I have not yet ascertained, bears about as much resemblance to a fat poodle-dog as the mantis does to a rearing horse; only, by an odd mistake or whim of Nature, he wears on his back the very saddle the mantis should have worn. His figure is short and round, with stout little legs. His color is brown, with the exception of a spot of vivid green, edged with gold, exactly in the shape of a saddle. He comes very near being a Cerberus; for he seems to have two heads, one at each end. With the moderately magnifying glass I use, I have not been able to decide which is the real caput. Both extremities are protected by ugly, bristle-like stings, which make this dog-caterpillar a pet not to be handled without gloves. He crouches on the leaf of the tree he affects, and clings so that it is almost impossible to dislodge him.

believes in "squatter sovereignty." At a little distance he looks like a large, discolored excrescence of the leaf; indeed, you can hardly tell where that *leaves off*, and he begins.

While I was making a study of the rear-horse, keeping my specimen, when not exercising him, in a small box, well ventilated and victualled, - the children called it "the stable,"—a friend brought me several of these canine caterpillars, attached to a large leaf of the pear-tree. There was a rough old dog, a female of more delicate make and coloring, and a couple of youngsters at her side. All these were simulating death, "playing 'possum," in the most perfect and obstinate manner; betraying not the faintest sigh of life, even when menaced by pencil-points and hair-pins. Even the young ones showed themselves little monsters of deception, - never stirring a hair's breadth, allowing not even a bristle to quiver. At last I concluded that the entire family group was indeed as dead as it looked; but, in order to be quite certain of the mournful fact, I placed the leaf, to which they adhered with a death-grip, under a tumbler, and left them for the night. In the morning I discovered that they had all revived, and were circling round the sides of the glass on a tour of exploration. I shook them off on to the leaf, where they immediately died again. I waited for a second revival; and, when that took place, I trotted out my rear-horse, and confronted him with the parent caterpillar, which instantly proceeded to die once more, while the *mantis*, evidently snuffing danger from those bristling stings, reared frantically, and fell over on his haunches. Had each recognized an enemy? Oh the wisdom of these wonderful little creatures! Who shall say if reason or instinct be more divine?

FARM-YARD FRIENDS.



FARM-YARD FRIENDS.



HE barn at Maple Lawn was not the unpicturesque, drearily practical edifice that usually goes under the name in thriving agricultural districts. Without, irregular,

weather-browned, and moss-grown: within, it held, first in importance, a great, wide, windy hall, in which strolling players might present the great tragedy of "Richard," with all the forces of Gloster and Richmond, their royal court-scenes, parades, marchings, campings, and bloody "scrimmages." Then there were wings, which were full of rambling passages, and dim nooks and corners, in which one might lose one's self in seeking the hay-mow, that sweetest and springiest of couches, curtained by a

perpetual, odorous twilight. Under its eaves nestled tame pigeons, whose delicious cooings seemed the languor and sweetness of summer hours translated into sound.

Some of their nests were attainable by good climbers; and we occasionally looked in upon their little nurseries, and caught sight of their newly hatched young ones, in their first, fuzzy, little bobtailed under-shirts, — forlorn, comfortless little wretches, all bill and claw and crop, forever gaping for their Diet of Worms. It was wonderful to think that from such a sorry beginning Nature was to produce beautiful, glossy-winged, soft-plumed, poetic creatures, — emblems of love and purity, and of the divine spirit of acceptance and peace.



In a precisely opposite direction wrought Nature on some little porcine inmates of the stable below. Pure white were they, with soft touches of pink here and there; clean and dainty, with saucy little twinkling eyes, and funny

twists in their tails, which seemed to come from the crazy quickness with which they whirled and capered about in

their narrow quarters. So frisky and frolicsome, so really pretty and engaging, were they, that it was melancholy to think that each would yet develop, lengthen, broaden, and fatten into such a stupendous shape of ugliness and coarseness as the huge old mother sus, who flopped about in the straw, and grunted out lazy protests against their noisy gambols.

In a neighboring stall, a fine young calf was imprisoned, during the piteous process of weaning. Previous to this sad season, we had enjoyed seeing the pretty creature at her meals. With what eager ardor she charged on the swelling udder! and how instantly, when the thirsty tongue caught the fine delight of the first delicious trickle, it telegraphed it to the tail, which responded with ecstatic little signals of its own!

Poor thing! she took the separation hard, and rebelled against the new way of receiving sustenance; snorting, and tossing her head in disgust. She refused to be reconstructed, declaring for "the Union as it was," without thange or compromise. She had to be benevolently garrotted, and regularly mobbed with the milk-pail. When at night the mother came up from the pasture to be disburdened of her precious store, — essence of tenderest brookside grass, cream of clover blossoms, — we watched her

with pitying interest. She drew as near as possible to the stable, a great, patient yearning showing itself in her mild face, called, and was answered by a voice beloved. All through milking-time the loving challenge and reply made the air resonant. Through the dim twilight and the cruel wall passed from bovine heart to heart a something invisible, intangible, ineffable,—

"For stony limits cannot hold love out."

In this capacious stable, were winter-quarters for four or five horses; which in summer, when not in harness, roamed the pastures "fancy free," with a pair of dun mules, on terms of apparent good-fellowship and equine equality. Of these worthies we saw little; but, loafing about the barn and cow-yard, was at any time to be seen a petted young mule, not yet inured to the harness or the bit, — a rather comely specimen of his tribe, and remarkably amiable. He always overlooked the milkings and the children's plays, with a ludicrous expression of friendly curiosity in his grave, foolish face. There was a tender softness in his eye, and an air about him of alert interest in human goingson, which I could but respect; yet the tout ensemble of the creature always made me smile. There was such a lack of balance in the figure, — such a bold beginning, such a

"lame and impotent conclusion!" Nature lays herself out with such a lavish prodigality on the ears, and gives out so lamentably in the tail!

Yet the mule is an animal of very romantic associations. I cannot see one without thinking of the jolly squires and fat priors of Robin Hood's time; of Sancho Panza and Dulcinea; of Alpine ascents and Andean treasure-trains. And of how many sacred and poetic Eastern scenes does he form a part! — the world's great worker, sturdy, patient, and reliable; the most useful and the best-abused friend of mankind.

One day the children made a startling discovery, while searching in and about this stable for hens' eggs. They found — not "a mare's nest," but a cat's nest, with three tiny kittens in it; two very dark, and tiger-striped; and one jet black, not a flake of white about him, a regular imp of darkness. They were the wild "olive-branches" of one of the cats that haunted the barn, hovering just outside the pale of civilization. The five house-pets were brought out at once to call on the little strangers; but they actually turned up their dainty noses, and put on aristocratic airs. They had evidently a prejudice against color. The wild young mother seemed strangely subdued and tamed by maternity: she quietly watched our proceedings.

and purred mellifluously; but, the children being rather too free and frequent in their visits, she soon changed her quarters, and hid her treasures from their profane gaze forever.



Hunting hens' eggs in the barn, out-houses, and garden, was very exciting sport for the little folk. Every afternoon they set out on their foraging expeditions, and often returned laden with spoil. Some of the hens, ambitious for family dignities, were very cunning in hiding their nests in the most out-of-the-way places; but few were so skilfully concealed as to escape our indefatigable little foragers.

Alice even discovered a sly Dame Partlett sitting on a surreptitious nest, in an old, out-door oven; hoping doubt-less to bring thence, in good time, well-bred chickens.

The child was much exercised about the stupidity and obstinacy of certain hens, who were bent upon sitting without due preparation, - some with only one egg, and some with no egg at all. She indignantly complained, one night, of the cantankerous conduct of a certain speckled biddy, who had lazed about all summer, and never laid an egg. "This afternoon," she said, "I thought to myself, Maybe she don't know how to make a nest; for she's young, you know. So I made her one, out of soft, fine hay, all rounded out nicely, and I put a real egg in it; and then I caught her, and showed her the egg; I put her nose and eyes right down to it. And then I put her on the nest, and held her down for a good many minutes; and she was very quiet. But, just as soon as I took away my hand, she jumped up, and flew away squawking. I never saw such an ungrateful old simpleton. Here I'd set her up with a comfortable nest, and a ready-made egg for a pattern, and she wouldn't lay. She may go childless to the end of her days, for all I care."

In this matter of laying, hens are, as a classic authority says of women, "queer creeturs;" sometimes so shy and secretive, sometimes so bold and boastful. A friend told us that one day a bustling bantam pullet came hurrying into her kitchen, from the barn, escorted by a gallant young cockerel. The two looked around them coolly, then walked, with an air of indescribable importance, into the pantry, where they were allowed to remain for a few moments, and whence they finally emerged, cackling and crowing joyously; the pullet having left in the middle of the floor a tiny egg.

A gentleman farmer we wot of has a pet pullet, who follows him about the yard like a dog, enters the house freely at door or window, and roosts about "promiscuous," as Artemus might say.

One summer day, after dinner, as

"The farmer sat in his easy-chair,"

in the breezy hall, enter biddy, tick, ticking her way over the oilcloth, and casting familiar sidelong looks at her friend. Receiving no repulse, she flew on to his shoulder, — a favorite perch, — and from thence to his knees, where she settled herself in downy repose. The farmer smoothed her snowy plumage slowly and more slowly; and at last he, too, slept.

He was awakened by a shrill, exultant cackle. The pullet had flown from his lap, but had left there her first egg!

One of the biddies of this farmyard displayed, on one occasion, more intelligence and purpose than I had ever given hen-nature credit for. My attention was called to her by a number of geese, who gathered about her, expostulating and scolding at a furious rate. As I drew near, I found that she was engaged in trying to extricate a luckless half-grown chicken from between the bars of a coop, where he had got stuck in attempting to "break jail." The hen, doubtless a friendly neighbor, pulled at him lustily with bill and claw, paying no heed to the indignant gabble of the geese,—a moving example of benevolence misunderstood. I stepped in, and finished her good work, and she stood forth vindicated from all fowl aspersions. But the geese gabbled and gossiped still, and, I doubt not, have the same opinion of her to this day.

The year previous to our visit, one of the farm hens succeeded, after many vain attempts, in hiding her nest, stocking it bounteously, sitting, and hatching in undisturbed quiet and security; and, one morning in the fall, she appeared at the kitchen-door, marshalling a large brood of belated little chicks. She strutted and clucked and scratched with immense exultation and importance. But the chill and rainy weather was too much for the constitution of her interesting but unseasonable family: they were

attacked by that fatal epidemic, the "gapes," and one after another they all succumbed to it; for "yawning is catching."

Moral: Don't set yourself in opposition to the almanac.

The turkey interest in the farm-yard was considerable. There was a large Meleagrisian community, chiefly of the "female persuasion," headed by a majestic old gobbler in steel and scarlet; pompous as a parish beadle, autocratic and venerable as a Mormon elder. He was a regular old Spartan ruler. If, among the goodly flocks of small turkeys that timidly peeped in his mighty presence, he caught sight of one hopelessly puny and sickly, he put it to death without mercy. He allowed no interlopers in his community. A hen who had been set on turkey-eggs, undertaking to "ring in" to the charmed circle of her chicks' aristocratic relations, was driven away ignominiously. He bore down on her like a buccaneer, with his red flag flying, under a heavy press of tail, and chased her up till she took refuge in her own humble coop, - Little-Egg-Harbor. Even her chicks, indisputable little turkey-lings though they were, born under an evil star and an alien wing, were pecked and buffeted unmercifully; and finally, for having insisted, like so many young Bourbons, on asserting their royal rights, were utterly exterminated.

He was a sight to behold—this terrible potentate—after having performed a stern military duty like this. He swelled and glowed, and spread himself; and his gobble—his "general order"—was heard afar off. He was a pacha of but one tail, but that was "a stunner."

Every morning the patriarch called together his numerous wives and family, and conducted them in state to the fields that lay along the creek, where they seemed to find good foraging of some sort. At night they returned for a supper of corn, and to roost in close ranks, a mighty force of fencibles. Coming and going on these daily journeys, poor wretches, they marched unconsciously in mournful funeral procession toward Thanksgiving and Christmas. Such is life.

One of the turkey wives, being dilatory in her domestic duties, put herself in the hatch-way quite late in the season. When she emerged from retirement with a fine brood, she was received with marked coldness by the elder, and absolutely forbidden to join his company with her tender chicks, for the daily excursions to the creek. She pleaded in soft turkey lingo, her little ones peeped piteously, the entire harem seemed to intercede for her; but the ancient patriarch of the poultry-yard was inexorable.

Moral: Same as before.

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There! if any other man or woman can write a longer, more learned, or a more lovingly tedious and particular article, about pigs and chickens, and "such small deer," I shouldn't like to see it.

THE FIVE LITTLE SISTERS OF MAPLE LAWN.

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WHEN our young friend Nicholas Nickleby — Ah! me! Mr. Nickleby of Dawlish, Devonshire, must be an elderly gen-

tleman by this time, a magistrate, and a grandpapa perhaps: he takes the chair at agricultural dinners, and fills it well; he keeps Christmas royally; and he stands by the British Constitution. Well, then,

when our friend Nicholas Nickleby was young, and we were all young together, and when he was on his way to

125

Dotheboys Hall, and the coach was upset, and the passengers took refuge in a lonely little inn, a gray-haired old gentleman, you remember, helped to while away the time by relating the pathetic history of "The Five Sisters of York."

I, too, have a story to tell of five sisters, as lovely in their lives, and as tenderly attached, as were they who sleep under the soft light of the memorial window in the great minster. But of another race are my five sisters,—natives of a wonderful land, undreamed of at the time when those merry maidens sat on the orchard-grass, at their embroidery-frames, in the reign of the fourth Edward.

Not noble are my heroines, though of an old family, held in high esteem in other times and climes, especially under the ancient republics. In the great square at Corinth once stood the bronze statue of a member of this family, honored as the emblem of liberty. The Egyptian branch, called *Maniculate*, became royal favorites, companions of a Pharaoh and a Ramesis, and were venerated, as possessed by mysterious powers of divination. They were placed on the *systrum* during religious rites, and at death accorded costly embalmment and sepulture in the high temple at Bubastos. Indeed, the family could boast a goddess of their own, called *Sancta Bubastis*. Horapollo says that in

the great Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis stood a statue of some representative of this favored race; and Cambyses is said to have taken Thebes by placing in the front of the Persian army a corps formed of members of a family so venerated by the Egyptians. Later, one of the race was a favorite of Mohammed, and accompanied him to Damascus.

The English branch of the great family emigrated from Cyprus. They were at first so highly esteemed, that royal edicts for their protection were issued; but, under new conditions of society, they declined in dignity as a race, though they occasionally rose to distinction as individuals. Shakspeare makes mention of one of them in "Macbeth." One appears in the history of the Tower of London, as the useful friend of a distinguished prisoner of state. One, for eminent services, had his arms quartered with those of a high London official. One, accounted a base pretender to the family name, entered the royal navy, where he ran a sanguinary career, but won no honor. In striking contrast to this pretender, who boasted as many appendages as a Spanish prince of the blood to his name, is the Manx representative of the family, with no appendage to speak of. Of the Celtic branch, several members became renowned in song and story, at Kilkenny, Ireland.

To be brief, the grand family name of this ancient race

is Felidæ, whence Felina, whence Felis Domestica, or, not to put too fine a point on it, The Cat. So it follows, that, quite in the order of nature, my five little sisters are just kittens! I have been thus particular in tracing their descent, because, being a republican, this matter of pedigree is of grave importance to me.

Three months of a late summer and autumn we spent deep in the country, at a farmhouse, quite beyond the "sound of the church-going bell." The rush of the express-train was there unheard; and the shriek of the steamwhistle scarce offended the breathless quiet of summer noons. Indeed, so tame and attenuated did it become ere it reached our ears, that a young shanghai cock on the premises (a fowl with such surprisingly long, bare legs, and such an insufficiency of tail, that he looked like a workhouse boy who has outgrown his charity-suit) could crow it down in the space of about two minutes.

The farmhouse was a quaint stone structure, full a century old; more like an English farmhouse than any thing I had seen since I saw the dear old motherisle, fifteen long years before. It was mantled by ivy and climbing roses, and sentinelled by a gigantic peartree. Very green and stately was this tree, but old and spent, and that season so over-weighted with fruit, that one

still August day he fell with a sharp groan, and laid all his burdened length upon the lawn. His family had been too much for him. It was a clear case of pear-i-cide.

On the other side of the house we had a charming little lawn, shaded by maples, and made very fragrant and bright by choice flowers. Beyond this, stretched green meadows and golden grain-fields, skirted by a cool, inviting wood.

But how, after all this introductory pomp and circumstance, am I to bring in my five little kittens? I wish I could bring them to you, as the children brought them to us from the stable one morning, all together, in a torn basket, which they quite overflowed in heads, tails, and limp little legs, as it was deposited on the grass of the maple-shaded lawn.

Alice, our one daughter, has a tenderness, which I must confess she comes honestly by, for cats. On her first day at the farmhouse, she had been greatly excited by observing a grave, gray, portly Uncle Thomas, strolling down one of the garden-walks. Hardly had she made acquaintance with him, who received her advances with a stately and lazy condescension, which only cats, babies, potentates, and members of Congress can assume, when she caught sight of a pretty, graceful grimalkin, evidently a young matron, who came from the direction of the barn, and timidly

applied at the kitchen-door for rations. To her we both made polite overtures; but she was shy or proud, turned a deaf ear to our palaver, and skilfully eluded the grasp of our inviting hands. This was the mother of the five little kittens of Maple Lawn.

Soon after we beheld, stealing out from the fastnesses of the asparagus-bed, a long, lank, black-and-white cat, with peculiarly wild and speculative eyes; "a lean and hungry Cassius" of a fellow, who, we were told, was a sort of fcline outlaw and bushwhacker; a prowler, and pauper whom nobody owned, not even the well-conditioned of his own race; a very Ishmael among cats. We bespoke him courteously, but he was off like the wind. He was not to be wheedled or bamboozled out of his wildcat-hood and vagabondizing.

We were told that there were several half-civilized cats haunting the barn and carriage-house; and we afterwards occasionally caught brilliant flashes of their society, but never became intimate with them. They came and went before our dazzled vision,

"Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be, Ere one can say, It lightens."

But to return to the five little kittens we left on the

lawn. They were white, at least the groundwork was white; but they were all more or less marked with black and yellow,—eccentric dashings of Nature's brush, which beautified her work with infinite variety. They were queer little roly-poly creatures, with stiff stumps of tails, very unsteady legs, and sealed-up eyes. They clawed each other, and tumbled about in an uncomfortable way, and with querulous mews seemed to be protesting against the general blankness of life. Yet when we took them out of their basket, and laid them on the soft turf, they stretched themselves in the sunlight, and seemed to guess what it was like, and to enjoy it.

Soon the mother came, — the pretty cat we had seen at the kitchen-door. She seemed glad to find her family in such pleasant quarters, and was herself no longer shy. She stole in among the helpless creatures so gently, so carefully, giving out at each step that indescribable mother-pussy murmur, which is next in tenderness to the coo of the pigeon, laid herself down, and called them to breakfast. It was curious to see how each little atomy groped its sure way to its place at table. And it was touching to observe the love, the joy, the utter content, with which the fair young mother regarded her treasures; the pride with which she glanced round at Uncle Thomas, standing

meekly by,—a look that seemed to say, after the manner of Sairey Gamp, "Blessed is the father who hath his quiver full of sich."

Shortly after this, Nature took her nine-days' interdict off the eyes of the five little kittens, and they could see,—very winkingly and blinkingly, and to small purpose at first; but the fact seemed to make them more interesting to the children, who forthwith held a solemn conclave, and resolved on a general christening. The names they selected were rather flowery and romantic, but scarcely inappropriate, to wit, namely, Lily, Daisy, Pet, Snowdrop, and Dewdrop.

All were so pretty, that each of the five was the favorite of some member of the household. Snowdrop was perhaps the beauty of the family, but she was not clever. White was she, with the exception of the tip of her tail, which was vividly tinted with the Austrian colors. Pure white was so evidently the first intention of Nature, that it looked as though the little marplot had dabbled her wee tail in the dye-pots prepared for variegating her sisters.

In the long summer afternoons we almost deserted the house for the grateful shade of maples, and the breezes on the lawn; and every morning that natal basket was brought from the barn, and we had the ever-diverting company of the five little kittens. How amusing it was to watch their first timid explorations of the yard and the flower-beds! They scrambled off at first, a yard or two at a time, in an aimless sort of a way, with gait unsteady, legs wide apart, and tails in air, borne stiff and erect as pikes. Sensuous little wretches, they loved to bask and roll lazily in the sunshine, to lie among the blossoming lilies, to steep themselves in the fragrance of roses and geraniums. It was long before they could carry the earthworks of a mound that stood in the centre of the lawn, and contained some of the choicest of the choice plants of our hostess. But they triumphed at last, and "revelled in the halls of the Montezumas." Some of the most delicate flowers were cat-nipped in the bud, but less damage was done than we looked for. They would chase each other round and round the flowery heights like mad, and at last go leaping down the grassy declivity one after another, in a tiny, tumbling, live cat-aract.

It was pretty to see them play ball with oleander flowers, or leap up, and try to ring the bells of the fuchsia, or toss about the red blossoms of the bignonia,—a luxuriant vine that climbed high on the north side of the house, and trumpeted the march of the days with gorgeous bloom,

but which on windy nights got quite out-blown, and flung down its fairy instruments in despair.

"I am amused at their little short memories," said Coleridge one day, after playing with a kitten, and seeing it pause in the eager pursuit of a ball of cotton, to chase its own tail

It must be that this illusive pursuit is the inevitable folly and absurdity of kittenhood: certain it is, that, as soon as the tails of our little kittens grew to sufficient importance to come within the range of their short vision, each set out on that futile, immemorial chase. They would often keep up the mad whirl, till, grown dizzy as waltzing belles, they would sink on the turf, panting and dishevelled.

Once, looking up from "The Tribune," I thus apostrophized crazy little Pet, in mid-career: "Thou silly little beast! hast thou no worthier object in life than thine own poor caudal appendage, ever tempting, ever eluding, which it sorely wearies thee to chase, and hurts thee to grasp?"

She paused an instant, winked wisely, and seemed to respond, "Nay, thou sad-eyed champion of womanhood, thou pale pen-drudge, thou weary student of politics, in what is the round of a woman of fashion nobler than my merry chase? Are the efforts of a poor author to make

both ends meet, of a statesman to attain his political ends
 by forever 'swinging round a circle,' more encouraging and
 less illusive than mine, prithee?"

Every prodigal summer day brought, with new blossoms to the garden, new charms and graces to our pets, till they grew to be the most bewitching, distracting little creatures imaginable.

"I've paced much in this weary mortal round;
And sage experience bids me this declare:"—

I have seldom encountered elsewhere, in America, Europe, Asia, or Africa, — especially in the two last-mentioned continents, — six such fair examples of feline grace, beauty, virtue, and sprightliness, as made up this incomparable group.

I say six; for the young mother, though usually maintaining proper dignity and discipline, sometimes frolicked and gambolled with the merriest *abandon*, and showed herself to be the spryest and most kittenish of them all, as well as the most comely and graceful,—

"Fairest of her daughters, Eve."

They were touching examples of sisterly affection, these soulless little things. They drank in harmony with their

mother-milk, and didn't scrouge much for the best places, for there was evidently a choice; some being like "flowing wells," and others requiring rather hard pumping. They purred in concert, took sweet counsel together, washed each other's faces, did each other's back hair, and always slept in each other's arms. Sometimes they were so conglomerated, in slumber, into a shining, palpitating, murmurous heap, that it was hard to tell where one kitten left off, and another began.

Snowdrop was evidently the beauty and pet of the family. Mother and sisters coddled and flattered her. I have seen three or four caressing her at one time, while she sat up like the grand lama, gravely receiving the homage, which was toilet-service as well.

Ah! hard and worldly must have been the heart, and dull the sense of beauty and humor, that could not be touched by the sight of our wonderfu' wee baudrons. To most of our visitors they were objects of ardent admiration; but so meek and sweet-tempered were they that we always dreaded for them the coming of certain small children, who insisted on lugging them about by the handle, and squeezing them as though they had been Dutch dolls, to get the mew out. Much I marvelled at the great patience of the little victims, whose satin paws sheathed such keen weapons of defence.

One of our visitors delighted us with an original cat anecdote. At a certain farmhouse dwelt two pet cats, who became mothers at about the same time. One had a fine litter of healthy kits: the other had but two, both sickly and short-lived. When the last died, the poor mother mourned over it with almost human tenderness and persistence. But at last she arose, quietly removed the little body from her bed, took food, washed her face. went straightway to the nest of the other cat, gently took up one of the supernumerary kittens, and returned with it to her own place, adopting it as her own. The mother made no resistance, and never sought to regain her offspring. Perhaps she was a bad mouser and general provider; she may have considered the scarcity of young robins; it may have been a bad grasshopper season: but let us rather hope that her feline sensibilities were touched by the desolation of her neighbor, whose hopes had been blighted, and whose kittens "were not."

But to return to the five little kittens of Maple Lawn, who were "all alive, O!" Ah! pleasant and innocent distraction for sad heart and weary brain, to watch these dainty, delirious bits of vitality, in their mad antics of fun and adventure; to see them develop, day after day, new arts of cunning and agility, new powers of mischief and

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gymnastics; to watch them scaling walls, mounting trees, wrestling, rolling, tumbling, darting out upon each other, sideways, from behind bush or bench, or other "coigne of vantage," skirmishing with beetles and grasshoppers, and making mad leaps after butterflies. Once we saw Miss Daisy dealing rather roughly with a honey-bee, who seemed disabled in a wing, and was making his way across the flagstones of the walk, bound, perhaps, for some Apisian hospital, when puss surprised him. He wheeled and retreated; but she anticipated him, and made hostile demonstrations. Considering the strength of the enemy, the contest was a serious one for him. Life was at stake, and life was sweet in honey-time. "To be, or not to be" a bee, was the question. So he valiantly gave fight; and poor puss soon retired in confusion, with a hot foot.

But more laughable it was to watch an attack made by the combined kitten forces on a poor old hermit of a toad, who once upon a time ventured forth from his cell under the stone door-step to enjoy the evening air. While hopping quietly along, he was discovered and surrounded by the saucy little troop, who charged upon him, and followed him up, and headed him off, pestered him, and made game of him, and looked all the while as frisky and bewitching as the pretty she-devils that tormented poor St. Anthony.

But more laughable still was an affair we witnessed between one of the older cats and a large tortoise found one day foraging in the garden. The cat made a careful reconnoissance before moving on the enemy's works, then, determined to "push things," pranced up in gallant style; but catching sight of an ugly, outstretched, vibrating head, he fell back to a new base, from which he made a second advance, and "felt the enemy" a little round the edges. Suddenly the pickets were called in, on front, flank, and rear: the enemy had retired into his intrenchments, whence it would be difficult to *shell him* out. It was evidently a position hard to take by strategy or assault; and, after sitting down before it for a while, our old moustache abandoned the siege.

This same tortoise had given our hostess a great deal of annoyance by devouring her young cucumbers. At last, after having graven on his shell certain letters, by which he might be known if again encountered, she banished him, as a trespasser and cucumberer of the ground. The very next morning he was found in his old haunts, having made a night march. She sent him yet farther off, and again he returned. Then she had him blindfolded, and carried to the extremity of the farm, beyond the creek. But he must have taken up his steady, tardigradous march

at once, without waiting for pontoons; for in a wonderfully short time he was back on the field of his old operations, determined "to fight the battle out on that line," &c.

But to return to the five little kittens of Maple Lawn.

Though so full to overflowing of frolic and mischief, wild tricks, and merry whimsies, they were yet rare and excellent sleepers. To their pampered senses, life was a fine frolic, a tipsy delight, or a soft oblivion. There was for them, however, a twilight state of half-consciousness,—a neutral ground of being and dreaming, when they dozed in the sun, or under the roses, and purred and winked, and were deliciously lazy, sensuous, senseless prodigals of time.

On moonlight nights they positively refused to sleep, but were all abroad, gleaming and leaping over the lawn, lighting up shadowy places, and looking themselves like stray bits of moonlight incarnated.

Later in the season, on chill and rainy afternoons we had that rare, old-fashioned luxury, a wood-fire in a great open fire-place in the parlor; and our pets were brought in, for we thought they would enjoy the warmth and glow immensely. But they were evidently awe-struck at the sight, and from a safe distance eyed, with startled or solemn faces, the beautiful lambent mystery, the splendid

terror. And yet they had never feared the great sun, in his utmost midsummer glory. As his mighty mantle rested on the earth, they had slept under its folds, and played with its golden fringe.

So we, unawed by the majestic mysteries of Nature, stand wide-eyed with wonder before the imitative marvels of human art, with their brief crackle and blaze. The spurt of a rocket dims the trail of a comet; a balloon can cause a solar eclipse; a Strasbourg clock can cheapen the mechanism of a universe.

But to return to the five little kittens of Maple Lawn. They ever grew in favor as in comeliness; and so when, in the early autumn, there came to me a dark, dread time of sickness, robbing that golden season of its light and bloom, and gracious, relenting coolness, it did not quite banish the memory of my merry little "ancients." As soon as the first bitterness and stress of suffering had passed, and the low-ebbed life began to flow back, I asked for them; feeling that somehow they, mute little creatures of a single summer, could best assure me of the unwasted fulness, the quick vitality, the spring and rebound and eternal gladness, of Nature. I almost felt that they could help me to move easily, and breathe freely, as the frog taught the philosopher to swim.

I often had them on my bed, all five, where they slept diligently most of the time, finding me but languid company, but where the sight of their play or repose alike seemed to do me good.

In intervals of listless ease from pain, I watched the pretty creatures; and, remembering the separations and tragedies that await the happiest feline families,—

"It was a sight that made me grieve, Although the sight was fair."

As the time for our return to the city drew near, speculations on their after-fate often troubled us. There was such an alarming increase in the cat-population of the farm, and the creek was at such a convenient distance! But finally the children formed themselves into a Kittens'-Aid-Society, and obtained the promise of good homes, in neighboring houses, for four of the sisters: the fifth was to remain in her old home. So, one dreary morning, we took leave of them all, Lily, Daisy, Pet, Snowdrop, and Dewdrop, with tolerable cheerfulness; though, the night before, Alice had bedewed each pretty, unconscious little head with childish tears. Even now she speaks of them wistfully, lovingly; while mamma — well, I am not ashamed to say that those jolly little companions of ours, those small

summer friends, sinless and soulless, fond and forgetful, innocent ingrates, honest inconstants, will long fill a bright space in my grateful memory with simple gladness and careless life; and no proudest human philosopher shall "scat" them out with his arrogant reason, or bully them with his immortality. Ay, long after each dainty creature has lived out her nine appointed lives, we shall remember them,—the five little kittens of Maple Lawn.

THE PERI.



THE PERI.



T was last fall a year, that, on our return home from the country, we all of us took note of a strange cat, of colossal mould, and of a rich, dark complexion, with tiger-

like marks, and peculiarly fierce, brigandish aspect, that haunted the rear of our dwelling, and sometimes mounted to the roof of our back buildings, there to discourse most diabolical music, comparable to nothing on earth but Japanese singing.

A wild, rough, marauding fellow was he, with a defiant, dissipated look, that discouraged all thought of domestication and redemption. He evidently preferred his roving habits, and "free, unhoused condition," to the steady-going ways, and gentle pussy proprieties, of respectable tame cats. We sometimes made amicable overtures; but he would have naught to do with us. In the very bosom of metropolitan society, he was an irreclaimable barbarian. He cultivated none of the amiable arts of polite life, except stealing. He sternly kept himself without the pale of civilization, unless it took the form of a milk-pail. With a chicken-wing, his fierce timidity took flight. He would run any risks with a turkey-leg. So matters continued, till the winter came on, unusually sharp and severe. Then on stormy nights we would sometimes catch a glimpse of our gay rover, peering through the back-parlor window, into the light and warmth, with a plaintive, wistful look, that said plainly, "Poor Tom's a-cold!" But as soon as we offered to lift the sash, and let him in, he was off in a flash of brindled lightning.

As the weather grew more inclement, so regularly did he come, and so piteously did he crouch out there in the cold and darkness, that we gave him the name of "The Peri," in memory of the one described in "Lalla Rookh," who,

"At the gate
Of Eden stood, disconsolate."

At last there came a time of utter discomfiture and unconditional surrender for our bold outlaw. A north-east storm of cutting sleet and biting cold was too much for his wild cathood. He came to the window, and beat his poor head against the pane, the crystal gates of his paradise, crying wildly to be let in. We could hardly trust our ears; and for a moment nobody stirred to lift the hospitable sash, so often lifted in vain. Indeed, "thrice the brinded cat had mewed," before we admitted him and a small avalanche together. The poor wretch was covered with snow, and almost stiff with cold; but he was utterly subdued, and as meek and serious as the "discreetest, wisest. virtuousest, best" old tabby in the neighborhood. eye, erst so fierce and bold, was full of soft beseeching; and the tail, late carried aloft like the black banner of a buccaneer, drooped dejectedly. He had struck his colors.

After gazing about him in an abjectly deprecating manner, he slowly crept up to the register, from which he evidently perceived the grateful warmth to emanate; then he laid himself down on his side, stretching his lusty limbs in a perfect ecstasy of comfort-taking.

After a time he thrust his paws between the bars, as though to clutch yet more of that rare heat; so like the old summer-glow on the south side of a chimney, that perhaps he speculated on the probability of our having put down the sun for winter use. Anon he gently beat the hearth-rug with his tail, and then he purred. And what purring was that? It was no more like to any civilized effort in that line you have ever heard than is the buffalo's exultant bellow to the lowing of patient kine. It was the most sonorous feline trumpeting we ever listened to. It bespoke the dignified satisfaction of a gentlemanly guerilla who had capitulated, and made excellent terms. After this chivalric salute he slept.

Waking, he seemed to experience an access of gratitude; for he rose, and, going from one to another of the family group, rubbed against us, purring vehemently, and was in turn caressed by us. He seemed to become more and more elevated, and indeed intoxicated, by his reception, till he came to the master of the house; who, buried in the evening papers, and veiled in cigar-smoke, took no notice whatever of our strange guest. Soon it became evident that this indifference troubled him. In vain we called him to us, lavished praises on his beauty, and with soft, smoothing touches followed his spinal column from the lordly head to the tail, again borne proudly aloft. Nothing could comfort this feline Haman, while Mordecai, absorbed in cigar and politics, withheld his homage. He returned to

the charge, and finally elicited a kind word, and a smoothing of his brindled coat, as an encouragement to virtuous living; then he was satisfied.

Our Peri was not thrust quite out of paradise that night, but permitted to remain in the kitchen. After that, he was, in inclement weather, allowed lodgings in the cellar, and regular rations. Every evening he came to the parlor window, and was let in, and petted, and played with, though his playfulness always partook of a ferocious, tigerish character, more perilous than satisfactory. The quickness of that creature's motions was too much for human eyes or muscles. The sharpness of his teeth and claws was most extraordinary; and, when he took a good hold, there was no giving-in. He was a cat of decidedly Celtic organization, ready at any instant to fly from a frolic to a fight. He seemed to be always inviting somebody to tread on his (coat-)tail, he laid it out at such an inordinate length, and switched it about so defiantly. So jealous was he of the dignity of that same spinal prolongation, that the kindest hand that in stroking him proceeded to extremities, and trespassed on caudal territory, came to grief.

He appeared to love us in his wild way, and to consider himself as a sort of independent retainer, or a genteel poor relation of the family; but proud, oh! very proud, — which, again, was quite in the line of that agreeable sort of relative; and therefore he did not care to extend his acquaintance among our friends. When he came to the parlor window at night, and, looking in, saw that we had visitors, he invariably declined to enter. So we could never parade our half-converted barbarian, our Dacian captive.

In the summer we again left town, and remained away till late in the autumn. On our return, we asked tidings of our Peri, and were told that his marauding, vagabondizing days were over; that he had been adopted by a most charitable family, next door, and had settled down into a cat of average respectability, having sowed his wild oats, seen life, and found that "really there was nothing in it." In his new home he is petted, and fed high, and is in a fair way to be taught the solemn moral lesson that "honesty is the best policy," and that virtue pays. He has a sleek coat, and a general well-to-do look, and answers now to the aristocratic name of "Sidney," to which we have added the "Sir Philip." But even that title is scarcely patrician enough to suit his present style; for the lofty and potentatish air of that cat is indescribable. Why, his very smellers have an imperial cock to them! To see him as we saw him only this morning, nonchalantly promenading on the area-wall, with a "raw lump of red liver in his mouth," -

the envy of all the lean cats in the alley, — was to see something imposing. It was like looking, through a reversed opera-glass, at a royal Bengal tiger lugging off his gory prey. And then to see him on the flat of the back building, strolling up and down in the sun, taking his "constitutional," and humming a popular cat-march the while, were enough to remind you of King Ahasuerus airing himself on the roof of his palace of Shushan. Were his tail a train of Tyrian purple, woven with gold, he could not wear it with a more regal sweep and swag. But, alas for feline gratitude and constancy! he never more comes to the back-parlor window, to, Peri-like, peer wistfully through the pane, and meow to be taken in. He has forgotten the forlorn estate from which we lifted him; he has forgotten us. He passes us almost daily, and cuts as he goes, giving us not so much as a tip of the tail by way of salute.

Well, go thy ways, Sir Philip! Ingratitude and inconstancy are not confined to thy soulless and reasonless race. Are we not also helped out of many a scrape, — sheltered, warmed, and fed for years on years? And does our gratitude keep pace with our indebtedness? Is our remembrance in proportion to our immortality? "I am amused at their little short memories," said the poet, speaking of some playful kittens. But are our short mem-

ories amusing to the divine helpers who rescue us, in the night of misfortune, from the tempest of passion, and the peril of the sin that paralyzes the mind's best powers, chills the heart, and wraps the conscience in a deadly sleep? Ah, Sir Philip, though in Egypt thy venerated race were given to divination, it is doubtful if thou canst answer such grave questions for us. "No, friend," thou mightest say, "I cannot moralize; but then thou canst not mouse."

BOB: HIS LIFE AND DEATH.



BOB: HIS LIFE AND DEATH.



BELIEVE that all the members of the pleasant household in which I am now tarrying for a brief season are genuine bird-lovers. The little gilded mansion that hangs in the sunny

dining-room is never without its happy inmate or inmates. I propose to sketch, simply as may be, the lives of a couple of these small tenants and dependents; and I enter on my agreeable task in no trifling mood. I am by no means wanting in reverence for the subject of my biographical essays. It has always seemed to me, that, while the brooding tenderness of the divine mind is especially revealed in flowers, its exuberant joy takes most varied and wondrous form in birds. They seem to us among the luxuries, the

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beautiful superfluities, of creation; they may be the necessities of the divine economy. We could forego them; God could not. In some glad, sweet rest of creative power,—after the seven labors of the "seven stars,"—perhaps, out of some divinest atmosphere, birds fluttered into being.

On the whole, I doubt if Boswell had more honest admiration for Dr. Johnson, Carlyle for the great Fritz, or Benvenuto Cellini for himself, than I entertain for the small personages whose lives and fortunes I propose faithfully to chronicle.

Bob was a mocking-bird of pure descent evidently. He was probably a runaway, or a Southern refugee; for he was first discovered on the roof of the house, in a condition of extreme exhaustion, ragged, starved, and forlorn. He was easily captured, and, weary of vagabondizing, took kindly to domestication. In a comfortable cage, with all the modern improvements, and well provisioned, he soon began to pick up, and thrive. His soiled and tattered plumage of grayish brown became trim and glossy; he held up his head in a peculiarly jaunty and debonair manner, suggestive of an invisible cocked-hat, with a tilt to one side; and at last burst into song, sending forth such brave, strong notes from his well-rounded throat, that the question of his sex,

which had been a matter of some discussion in the household, was considered settled. "There, now," said the young gentleman who had discovered and captured the wanderer, "the bird sings like a male, it bears itself like a male, it is a male; and its name shall be Bob."

All this sounded very wise and conclusive; but the laugh was turned against the young naturalist, a few mornings later, when there was discovered on the floor of the bird's cage a little brown, speckled egg! Yet the masculine name had been so firmly fixed on my lady-bird, before that startling discovery, that it could not easily be thrown aside. She continued to be called Bob; and that little matter of the egg, her sole indiscretion, was soon forgotten. In short, she became he, to all intents and purposes.

Bob was by no means a bird of dainty appetite, but ate greedily of all sorts of fruits, of cake and meat, having an especial relish for beefsteak and mutton-chop. Being singularly ingenious, he soon contrived to open the door of his cage; and he would step coolly forth, and make the tour of the dining-room, whenever it so pleased him. It was observed that he was most likely to make his appearance when he saw preparations for a meal going on. He would perch on a chair-back, or the clock-shelf, till the servant came up bearing the viands or dainties he most

affected; when he would dart forward, pounce upon platter or cake-basket, and frequently carry off more than his weight of plunder. Not satisfied with these highway robberies, he would often flit around the table, light on some friendly shoulder, and thence make sallies and forays, confiscating currants and grapes, and intercepting supplies of cakes and tarts.

Very soon this remarkable bird manifested qualities of heart equalled only by his cleverness. For the master of the house, Gen. T—, he showed a tender and loyal affection that was quite touching. Whenever this friend appeared, Bob would fly to meet him, light on his shoulder, his head, or his hand, and indulge in various little jubilant demonstrations. It was finally noticed, that, as dinner-time approached, he would leave his cage, and perch on a stand behind the door opening on to the landing of the stairway, where he actually listened with comical intentness for the sound of the general's latch-key. When that was heard, followed by the quick, firm, familiar step, he danced with delight; and, when the general himself appeared, he darted with a swift whirr to his shoulder, where he fluttered and twittered, and "rode sublime."

True to his sex, — supposititious, not real, — Bob was given to jealousy. He would suffer no rival near the

throne. An unfortunate little dog was the cause of some fearful outbreaks of this unlovely passion. Bob would first scold vehemently: then, if the offender did not display "the better part of valor," and fall back, he would attack on front, flank, and rear; and invariably did he drive the enemy from the field. He was even jealous of the master's occasional companion and solace, the cigar. He pecked at it, protested against it, and finally pounced upon it when it was in full blast, and bore it away in triumph. Here was a bird after James Parton's own heart!

There was a certain friend and frequent visitor of the family, to whom Bob was attentive in a peculiar manner, more startling than agreeable. This gentleman, though scarcely of middle age, had a shining, bald expanse "on the top of his head," to which he naturally did not care to have the attention of the company called; but no sooner would Bob see him enter the room than he would break from his cage, and make directly for that shining dome, where he perched unsteadily, vainly endeavoring to fix his claws in the glacial surface. The untenable position seemed to have a strange attraction for him; and he repeated his attempts to hold it, till the visitor, half frantic, begged leave to keep on his hat, as a protection against that "devil-bird," as he called Bob.

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One day, while the windows were open, and Bob enjoying the freedom of the apartment, no one dreaming of his making his escape, a wild impulse to see the world again, entered his little brain, and he darted forth at once. He did not go far, however, in search of adventures, but, after circling round for a little while, perched on the chimney of a neighboring house, where he gazed about him in a forlorn, bewildered way, as though appalled by the vastness of the city, and by his own folly and temerity. He was evidently looking anxiously for his home; but the dreary uniformity of Philadelphia architecture was too much for him. At last his master appeared at an attic-window, and whistled. Bob turned his little brown head; he listened, he flew; and the next moment he was on that beloved master's shoulder, as happy as a king, and as penitent as the Prodigal Son. Returned to his cage, he ate and drank, fluttered up and down, swung on his perch, and finally burst into a joyous canticle of his own composing. He had seen the big world, and found it but a howling wilderness of brick and mortar, of barren flats, and monotonous chimney-pots. He never voluntarily left his home again; but the following summer the family went to board in a farmhouse, and, of course, took Bob with them. though strange and a little sullen at first, he finally became

quite domesticated, fell into all his charming old ways of "breaking jail," stealing from the table, looking out for bald-headed gentlemen, making love to his master, and scolding and mocking all the other pets on the premises.

There were about the farmhouse two large gray cats. very similar in form and complexion, striped and spotted and whiskered alike, but in character, and habits of life, widely different. They were not friends, in fact, were decidedly unfriends, dwelling together in disunity and brotherly enmity; except that they really did not dwell together at all, and that only one of them ever showed much fight. This one had his headquarters at the barn, and was called "Wild Moses." The other was a quiet, steady-going house-pet, and was called, by way of distinction. "Tame Moses." This last was now and then the object of Bob's hostile demonstration; but he always gave way before his small adversary in the most magnanimous, or pussy-lanimous manner. The way in which victorious Bob would strut away from the field of combat was something well worth seeing. But one day it happened that Wild Moses, who occasionally came bushwhacking about the garden, made a raid upon the hall, and from thence pushed his way into the dining-room. Bob, who was taking his "constitutional" on the sunny

window-sill, caught sight of him, and evidently took him for his civilized kins-cat. It was a fatal case of mistaken identity; for the courageous bird, descending at once from his "coigne of vantage," walked deliberately up to the intruder, with defiance bristling in every feather. Wild Moses not only stood his ground, but opened wide his savage mouth, and — How can I go on? When the fierce creature was overtaken, and compelled to drop his prey, the bright eyes of the bird were already dim; that little loving, loyal, valiant heart had ceased to beat!

This was the last of poor Bob, except his funeral obsequies, which were very touching and imposing. He was laid to sleep under a currant-bush (he was very fond of currants), completely shrouded with rose-leaves, and with his poor little head pillowed upon pansies.

It was a very little brown lump of clay that those flowers and that earth hid from sight; no bird-kin mourned for him, not a songster hushed her merry morning lay; but not a little brightness and blitheness went out of certain human lives that day,—ceased, like the ceasing of a pleasant strain of music, at Bob's small grave.

MASTER TOM'S EXPERIMENT.



MASTER TOM'S EXPERIMENT.



OM and Alice Hayley stood at an open window, one brilliant, cold morning in December, about five years ago, feeding the snow-birds; or, rather, Alice was feeding them, while

Tom looked on with a lofty, superior air. As the birds hopped about, eagerly picking up the nice white bread-crumbs, Alice exclaimed, "The dear little darlings! how thankful they are! Tom, don't you suppose they take me for their Providence? A rather small one though, ain't I?"

"Oh! a good-sized one for such little birds," replied Tom. "If they were eagles, now, why, I'd about do."

"But, Tom, if I really was their Providence, — or say their fairy queen, — I'd make it summer for them the whole year round. I wouldn't send the frost to bite their little feet, and give them chilblains, nor the snow to cover up their food, and make dear little paupers of them. They are born in the spring, you know, into such a pleasant, sunny world, where berries and worms are plenty; and it must be a dreadful disappointment to them when every thing changes so, — when the old earth gets her back up, and turns away from the sun, and there's what's called a coolness between them. But, Tom, why don't the snow-birds go south with the swallows, and other sensible birds? Are they afraid of the war down there?"

"Maybe so; and maybe they are more 'loyal' Northerners, and won't secede; or maybe, when they were made, the instinct that tells the swallows when and where to travel, was left out of them. Poor little mites of things! there isn't much room for sense in their wee heads."

Then wise Tom leaned back against the window-frame, and thrust his hands into his pockets, and thought and thought, till Alice had fed out all her crumbs, closed the window, and run away from the frosty air to warm herself by the nursery fire. And this was what Master Tom said to himself: "The Bible says that our heavenly Father has a care for the sparrows; but it doesn't say any thing about snow-birds, and, really, Providence don't seem to be look-

ing out for the poor things at all. So why shouldn't Alice and I take them in hand, and make them comfortable for the winter? We'll turn the den into a regular bird-asylum, where they can have a little summer all to themselves, and go on with their laying and setting and hatching in spite of Jack Frost. We'll show them a pretty good imitation of Providence, anyhow. Won't their hearts sing for joy, though?"

Now, Tom's "den," alias his "shop," alias his "study," alias his "laboratory," was a cosy little chamber just over the nursery, nicely warmed by a register from the furnace, and with a south window which caught all the sunshine there was going. It was so close and warm that Tom's mamma would not allow him to shut himself up in it long at a time, without the window-sash being let down a little from the top. Here was really a small perpetual summer.

All that day, there was whispering between Tom and Alice, much running back and forth, and arranging,—a delightfully mysterious plot on foot. Plants, belonging to the children, were carried up to the den from the conservatory, and evergreens brought from the woods, and hung about the walls. By much "beating about the bush," Tom found two bird's-nests in tolerably sound condition, one of which he fixed in a rose, and the other in an orange-tree, where it

seemed they must look very tempting indeed to any loving pair of birds, ambitious to found a family. Then the two young philanthropists spent a considerable portion of their pocket-money in the purchase of bird-seed, and a pretty cage designed for such as might prefer to live in an exclusive and artificial way, and keep house in style. Then they were ready to commence operations.

Now for the birds! Alas, they found it not so easy to get possession of those small objects of charity. In vain they set the window of the den wide open, with its tempting show of flowers and greenery, and a little table set out with crumbs and seed: the feathered mendicants were as shy about entering it as thoughtless worldly people are about entering churches that offer the most extensive gospel privileges. At last the children appealed for help to one of the farm-boys, an obliging, ingenious young gentleman by the name of Jerry Hicks, who furnished them with a bird-snare so cunningly contrived, that, the very first morning, they caught in it no less than four birds, — enough to begin the asylum with. The next morning they caught but two; and after that, strange to say, no snow-birds would come near enough to the cottage of the Hayleys to take a sprinkling of salt on their tails. The shrewd little vagabonds had taken the alarm from the fate of their

companions; and preferring beggary, cold, and want, with freedom, to ease, warmth, and plenty, with imprisonment, they kept at a safe distance. So Tom and Alice were obliged to content themselves with their small colony.

At first, when a little recovered from the fright of their capture, the birds ate greedily, and were evidently troubled with indigestion and excessive thirst; but after a while their appetites fell off, and they seemed, to their munificent patrons, even dainty and thankless. The strangeness of the place inclined them to silence perhaps; for they did not sing or chirp, and they seemed utterly unsocial and untamable. Allie was sorry to find that they did not bathe and plume themselves, like canaries and other "quality" birds, but heldto their wild country ways, evidently making no account of roses, japonicas, orange-trees, and painted cages. As for the nests, to Tom's intense disgust, they took no notice of them whatever, and showed no disposition to lay eggs to order, and to sit upon compulsion. They were not to be beguiled or bamboozled into the belief that the real spring had come, or even St. Valentine's Day, - the time for choosing their mates, and taking upon themselves the duties and responsibilities of domestic life. Very soon they began to mope and peak and pine, and to look shabby, and move languidly. Each tiny little tip-up of a tail lost

its jaunty wag, and its pert bob, and actually looked limp and desponding. They would sometimes gather together in corners, and sulk; sometimes perch on the window-frame, and look out on the snowy lawn in a wistful way that was quite touching to behold; and, one day, Alice said, "I tell you what, Tom, it's a failure! The poor little things are dreadfully homesick and mopy; suppose we let them go, to look out for themselves a little. Maybe that's God's way of caring for them. I don't believe he forgot them, though he didn't send them down South, where the oranges and peanuts grow. He thought a little hardship would be good for them. Let's set them free again."

"No, no, Allie," said Tom: "wait a while, and they'll get used to it. If Queen Victoria should take you into her palace, and give you new dresses, and plum-pudding every day, you'd be homesick at first; but, after a while, you'd get used to grandeur, and forget all about us and the farm, and be as fine and stuck-up as the Queen's own girls."

"No, I won't!" exclaimed Alice indignantly: "I will fret myself to death, just as sure as ever she does it; and so will the birds, I tell you now!"

It seemed Alice was not a bad prophetess; for the very

next morning, when the children visited their asylum, they found two of their tiny charges lying on their backs, on the window-sill, with their little legs in the air, stiff and cold, and very dead indeed! With a cry of grief and horror, Alice threw open the window, and actually drove the survivors out into the fresh air; which, fortunately, was very mild that morning. They paused on the porch below the window, and tried their feeble wings, before trusting themselves to go farther against the wind; but they did fly at last, by easy stages, into the wood, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, never returned, even for rations.

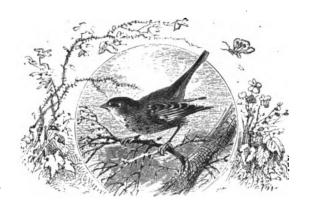
Tom and Alice removed the snow from a violet-bed, and there buried their ill-fated pets. After his sad duty was ended, Tom stood looking thoughtfully down.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Alice.

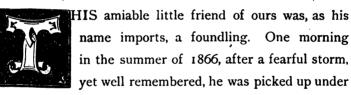
"I was thinking, Allie—well, I was thinking that the old Providence was the best one after all, even for little birds."

15*

WAIF.



WAIF.



a tree, from which, a half-fledged birdling, he had evidently fallen, beaten down by the rain. Of the other members of his family, or of the nest in which he may have rocked, well pleased, in the soft, soughing wind that preceded the tempest, no traces were seen. In fact, about his birth and parentage, and earliest history, there is a something of mystery, of uncertainty, decidedly romantic. Yet he looked little enough like a hero to the eyes that first fell upon him, as he lay, faintly panting out his just-begun life, on the hard, wet flagstones, that dreary morning.

He was ragged and dirty, with no beauty that man or woman should desire him. He had already closed his eyes, and taken his farewell of this tempestuous life, with a feeling, perhaps, that he was going away after the sunshine and the stillness he so missed.

He was tenderly taken up, dried, warmed, revived, and fed, for sweet charity's sake; but for a long time he continued very forlorn, unsteady on his legs, with a limp neck, helpless-looking wings, and a most discouragingly homesick and dejected expression. The storm that had so early burst upon him had evidently given him a distaste for an existence subject to such accidents and conditions. The whole air of the bird seemed to say, "I have no heart to dip deeper into the tragic story, 'that roars so loud, and thunders in the index.'"

The bird had not then the faintest prophecy of bright plumage. In his dilapidated suit of dull gray, the sad, sickly little stranger appealed to no sentiment but pity in the hearts of that kindly household. They tried faithfully to coax him back to happy, healthful life, to convince him that the same sun was shining that shone before the fall of his house, that the same airs were blowing that whispered among the leaves in the dear old tree, that there was a loving human providence for virtuous little birds, that "looked at the heart, and not at the coat."

One of the young ladies possessed a beautiful canary, named Frémont; to whom, by the way, she afterward gave a mate called Jessie, a faithful and valiant better-half. But, at this time, Monty dwelt by himself, spending much time in eating, and more in pluming his bright feathers; much given to gay bursts of mal-àpropos song, and retiring to his solitary perch at night in jolly unconsciousness of his forlorn bachelor condition. To this gallant fellow his mistress ventured to introduce our poor little Waif, hoping that so pleasant and advantageous an acquaintance might cheer his drooping spirits. But I am sorry to have to record that Monty, in the pride of his "fine feathers," in all the insolence of a royal favorite, showed the utmost contempt and jealous dislike for his humble visitor. After eving · him for a moment with fiery scorn, he flew at that timid, half-naked creature, and gave him just the sort of dressing he neither desired nor deserved. When the little victim was rescued, he was half dead with fright, to say nothing of his wounds and bruises. Then the radiant victor, looking like so much pure sunshine incarnated, mounted to his perch, and sang like a very cherub triumphant after a round with a small imp of darkness.

From that time Waif stood in the most fearsome awe of Monty; who, for his part, profoundly despised Waif,

even after that bird's splendid transformation — but I am anticipating.

One day Waif's cage was hung out of the window, in the hope that the sun and fresh morning air might revive him. But the fastening proved insecure: something gave way; and the pretty cage fell to the pavement, where it went to smash, after the manner of a railroad-train. From out of a little heap of ruins, poor Waif was dug, appar-But he was only stunned. He soon revived, ently lifeless. and, oddly enough, seemed far more lively and cheery than before. This accident, so nearly a fatal tragedy, seemed to have knocked all the melancholy nonsense out of him. He took more cheerful views of life, and actually from that day grew beautiful, putting forth the most lovely plumage. His head and neck were clothed in atin of exquisite azure; his coat, of like material, was of vivid, yet delicate green; while his waistcoat, of old Continental length, was scarlet, shading into orange. His wings were green, faintly tinged with gold. His bran-new costume but worthily set off a light little figure, indescribably dainty and graceful. bird-fanciers now found a name for him: he was pronounced a "nonpareil," a songless though valuable bird, of native birth, but rare.

No, he did not sing, he never sung precisely; but he fre-

quently indulged in a pleasant little twitter that certainly reminded one of singing.

Waif, seemed to enjoy the surprise and delight of his friends in his magical transformation. He was glad and proud, and appeared no longer to heed the airs of the arrogant canary, who, from a neighboring cage, still derided and defied him in song, like an operatic hero.

Toward his friends he was gratefully loving, showing in a thousand charming little ways, which only genuine bird-lovers can understand, his sense of their kindness in his early dubious days; saying plainly enough, in



his wordless bird-language, "I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

In the spring-time it was that Monty died. The "handsome tenor" was not destined "to lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;" but a skilful anatomical preparation was made of him, and placed in a glass case, and he thus became an ornament of my lady's chamber. Here each morning his fond mistress beholds him, perched in immovable stillness; yet she almost listens for the sweet, triumphant song that has died away into eternal silence, or passed on.

One day, for an experiment, Waif was taken up, and placed under the glass with his old enemy, whom he thus beheld "in his habit as he lived." At first Waif showed the most abject fear; but, after some moments had passed without bringing the expected hostile demonstrations, he seemed to suspect that something was up, and began to reconnoitre more closely. Then, convinced that Monty was somehow hors de combat, he "went for him" most valiantly, resolved, doubtless, to exact indemnity for all old grievances to the last feather. He had to be withdrawn from the arena by force, still bristling all over with fight. There is a vast deal of human nature in these little creatures.

Waif's first moulting was a very sad experience for him. He had taken such innocent delight in his beautiful plumage, the song that was doubtless in him seeming to break out so satisfactorily in this way, in tints instead of trills, that he was evidently quite discomfited by the change back into more than the old forlornness. He did not quite strike his brave colors; but they were tattered and torn as by a sharp engagement, while his tail went utterly by the board. In this sorry plight he was evidently touched and

flattered by the kindly notice of his friends. Whenever the general, in particular, took him in his hand, caressed him, and spoke to him lovingly and cheeringly, he would at once hold up his head with the air of a bird and a brother. He would, metaphorically speaking, put his thumbs in the arm-holes of his little ragged red waistcoat, and stand ready to face a well-dressed world. He knew that the bird was all right, whatever was the condition of its plumage; yea, though it was not! He had all the inner consciousness of tail, and he liked to have the abstract being and birdhood of him respected. Soon he asserted himself for the most faithless and unbelieving, and was again resplendent in a "coat of many colors."

Like Bob, Waif is often allowed the freedom of the dining-room. When there are stranger-guests, he eyes them curiously and shyly, walks, round them, observing them critically (ah, if we could come at his estimates of character!), and, if he is satisfied, flies on to an extended hand, and establishes friendly relations at once.

It is pleasant to see him light on the strong arm of the general, and, with his pretty head archly turned to one side, peer up into the face sometimes accounted proud and stern, with the most fearless faith and jolly good-fellowship. He seems to have divined the tenderness that always underlies

true manliness and courage. Not intellect and culture, not systems of philosophy and science, not even stormy memories of battle, make a gulf across which those daring little wings may not pass. The bird-life has also its mysteries and memories, which the larger life is bound to respect. When that strong hand, which is his providence, closes about him, he lies still, without a flutter of apprehension for his present safety or future salvation.

Thus our little friend lives his happy, harmless life from day to day, in unconscious harmony with great eternal law, his loving instinct blending in fearless companionship with our intellect and reason. He pits his feebleness against our strength, and has no doubt but that we will reverence it, as his peculiar dower from the good God. Innocent prodigal of time, he spends his golden hours, and never questions whither the swift days are bearing him. tucks his head under his wing at night, with no sad thoughts of duties forgotten, or of work half done. Remorse haunts not his perch. His life is content: it is happiness; it is peace. He is perhaps happier, and surely humbler, than if he knew that his plumage was iridescent with the loveliest colors that streak the morning sky, that his small breast was palpitating with tiny wavelets of the great life of life. He does not trouble his little head, I

think, about his moral responsibilities, or his mission here. His mission is to be the little joy-spirit, and the little care, of a human household, to bring smiles to thought-worn faces, and pleasant gleams to eyes acquainted well with tears; and he performs this all the better, perhaps, for being utterly unconscious that he has any mission at all.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers (great and small), for thereby some have entertained angels (and non-pareils) unawares."



